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EXISTENTIALISM VERSUS MARXISM

CONFLICTING VIEWS ON HUMANISM

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY

GEORGE NOVACK

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EXISTENTIALISM

A DELTA BOOK

versus MARXISM:

CONFLICTING VIEWS ON HUMANISM

◆ *Edited with an Introduction, by* GEORGE NOVACK

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1

THE ORIGINATORS

THE OBSCURE ONE

I

INTRODUCTION

Existentialism and Marxism are the most widely discussed and widely held philosophies of our time. The first is dominant in Western Europe and gaining popularity in the United States. The second is not only the official doctrine of all Communist countries but, in one form or another, is accepted as a guide by many movements and parties throughout the world.

Two Decades of Controversy

Over the past twenty years the proponents of these two schools of thought have engaged in continual debate with one another. The center of this controversy has been France. There Existentialism has found its most talented spokesmen in Jean-Paul Sartre and his associates, who have developed their positions in direct contact and contest with Marxism. Living on a continent where socialism has influenced public life for almost a century and in a country where the Communist party gets a quarter of the vote, is followed by most of the working class, and exerts heavy pressure upon radical intellectuals, these "mandarins of the Left" have had to make clear their attitudes toward Marxism at every stage in the evolution of their views.

The relations between the politically oriented Existentialists and the Marxists have been highly complicated. Sartre worked out his original Existentialist ideas under the influence of nonmaterialist thinkers like Husserl and Heidegger as a deliberate challenge to Marxism and presented them as a philosophical alternative to dialectical materialism.

For their part, the leading Communist ideologists attacked Existentialism as an idealistic, subjectivist expression of the decay

of bourgeois thought that had reactionary political implications. They focused their fire upon Sartre because his prestige among radical intellectuals was regarded as a threat to the predominance of Communist views.

Sartre himself has assumed varying postures toward the Communist movement from 1943 to 1965. He has been an unattached partisan of its policies, the initiator of an independent socialist venture, a close supporter during the Cold War years of the early 1950's, and, since his denunciation of the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolt in 1956, a critic of its positions.

Paradoxically, as he widened his distance from official Communism, Sartre kept lowering the formal barriers between Existentialism and his interpretation of Marxism to the point that in his latest philosophical work, the *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* he declares that Existentialism is a subordinate branch of Marxism aspiring to renew and enrich Marxism.

Despite Sartre's overtures to historical materialism, orthodox Marxists have continued to consider the method and principles of the two philosophies as fundamentally incompatible and any attempt to mate them as sterile and futile.

Meanwhile, since 1953 the de-Stalinization processes have modified the status of philosophy within the Soviet bloc. Resentment against the evils of Stalinism and disillusionment with the debased and falsified version of Marxism-Leninism imposed by the acolytes of Moscow have stimulated strong currents of "revisionism." Some of its representatives have turned toward Existentialist ideas as an antidote for Stalinist dogmatism. Thus today the neo-Marxist Existentialism of Sartre is matched by an "existentialized" Communism of iconoclasts like the Polish philosopher Kolakowski.

This introduction proposes to chart the course of this debate and clarify the fundamental issues in dispute between the nonreligious Existentialists and their Marxist opponents.

A Philosophy of "Extreme Situations"

Although its ancestry has been traced back to St. Augustine, the father of Christian theology, and Pascal, the tormented doubting

seeker for faith in God, and although it has drawn inspiration from the writings of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, who lived in the last century, Existentialism is a later arrival in philosophy than Marxism.

However much it owes to its many precursors, Existentialism is essentially a twentieth-century philosophical phenomenon. It first emerged as a distinctive current of European thought through the phenomenological school of Husserl, Jaspers and Heidegger, who inspired the contemporary French Existentialists.

What is its paramount message, what does it say that is new and significant?

The psychological ground tone of Existentialism is an overwhelming sense of tragedy arising from the inherent and insurmountable senselessness of man's position in the world. Such a sentiment of the irrationality of existence has welled up before in history. But it has become especially prevalent and acute in our own day.

The liberal progressive forces of the last century felt in tune with their times. They looked forward to an increasingly just, humane, free and peaceful future, which seemed guaranteed by the unprecedented expansion of Western civilization, the achievements of science, technology and invention, the swift pace of industry, the spread of education, enlightenment and democracy.

As this century has unfolded, their buoyant optimism has given way to widespread pessimism about the situation and prospects of mankind. The times have been thrown so far out of joint that to many it appears almost hopeless to attempt to set them right.

The mournful impression of a world that is fragmented, indifferent, meaningless, lies at the core of Existentialism. "This philosophy, they say, is the expression of a world which is out of joint. Most assuredly, and this is precisely what makes it true," declares Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In a play by Gabriel Marcel, the heroine, Christiane, exclaims:

> Don't you sometimes have the impression that we are living . . . if we can call that living . . . in a broken world? Yes, broken as a watch is broken. The spring no longer functions. . . . If you put the watch to your ear, you no longer hear anything. The world of men . . . it used to have a heart, but I'd say that this heart has stopped beating.

The universe and human life, exponents of Existentialism assert, are inexplicable in the very heart of their being. Indeed, this encounter with the nothingness of existence, disclosed by nausea, anguish and other painful states, is the fundamental, all-encompassing, ineradicable characteristic of being human, they say.

The stamp of Existentialist emotions—despair, lonesomeness, guilt, boredom, etc.—is upon much of the vanguard art in the West today. Here is how the playwright Ionesco, who, with Samuel Beckett and Jean Genet, has changed the contemporary stage, enunciates this sentiment of the intolerable incoherence of existence:

> I feel that life is nightmarish, painful and unbearable. Look around you: wars, catastrophes and disasters, hatred and persecution, confusion, death lying in wait for all of us . . . we struggle . . . in a world that appears to be in the grip of some terrible fever. . . . Have we not the impression that the real is unreal . . . that this world is not our true world?

The Existentialist thinker feels solitary in the midst of today's society, cut off from nature, the rest of humanity, his most intimate friends, and even his deepest self. This many-sided alienation weighs on him like an eternal fate that cannot be changed or conquered, even though man is obliged to contend against it.

The forms of alienation so poignantly articulated in the Existentialist "tragic sense of life" are deeply embedded in existing social realities. Yet they are not inherent in the nature of man. They are, according to Marxism, historically created disorders characteristic of a bourgeois civilization "sick unto death."

Borderlands are not likely to be peaceful or comfortable places —and the most violent disturbances occur on the frontiers of history when an outgoing social order clashes with an oncoming one. We are living between an old world that is breaking up and a new world being organized. The power of capitalism is being challenged by forces of socialism that have already displaced it in countries on four continents.

This perilous transition period, when, as Sartre says, "the chips are down," was ushered in by the war of 1914–18 and the 1917 Russian Revolution. In the fifty years since, crises of all kinds—

economic, social, political, moral, intellectual and spiritual—have been constant companions of twentieth-century man. As class antagonisms and national rivalries have sharpened, the ideas, norms and institutions of a happier day have cracked and crumbled. Liberalism and its political embodiment in parliamentary democracy has been contested by fascism and other forms of reaction on the right and by socialist and communist movements on the left.

Two world wars, the rise of totalitarian governments, concentration camps and gas chambers, the extermination of six million Jews, the slaughter of colonial peoples, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the ebb and flow of revolution and counterrevolution compose the fabric of contemporary history. "Do you know that over a period of twenty-five years, between 1922 and 1947, 70 million Europeans —men, women and children—have been uprooted, deported or killed?" Albert Camus cried out in one of his postwar essays.

The shock waves of these upheavals have dislodged large numbers of people from their accustomed grooves of life and thrown them into unexpected predicaments. They have been wracked by anxieties, buffeted by forces beyond their understanding and control, confronted with uncertain choices. Such bewildered and frightened individuals could not help questioning their most trustworthy values and cherished creeds. How was one to make sense of it all?

Cyclones often bear down on parched earth. So, paradoxically, the very masses afflicted by these cataclysmic events did not find much satisfaction and self-fulfillment during ordinary times in the daily grind of earning a living in factory or office. They lived dulled and deadening routine existences in which they felt alienated from their fellow humans and themselves, bereft and alone in a huge, uncaring world.

Many sociologists have noted the pervasive depersonalization, indifference and joylessness in what they call the "bureaucratized mass society" that treats workers like interchangeable, standardized parts of a machine and deprives persons of individuality, freedom and pleasure in their occupations and amusements. "Life in a society of masses," wrote C. Wright Mills in *White Collar,* "implants insecurity and furthers impotence; it makes men uneasy

and vaguely anxious; it isolates the individual from the solid group; it destroys firm group standards. Acting without goals, man in the mass just feels pointless."

Existentialism arises from a heightened awareness of the aimlessness, anonymity and anxiety impregnating the urban anthills upset by the convulsions of our times. It aspires to comprehend this state of affairs and find a way out of it. The philosophy of existence originated among certain professional thinkers in the defeated, crisis-torn Germany following the First World War. One of them, Karl Jaspers, testifies on the inception of his viewpoint:

> In 1914 the World War caused the great breach in our European existence. The paradisiacal life before the World War, naive despite its sublime spirituality, could never return: philosophy, with all its seriousness, became more important than ever.

The ideas of Existentialism have received their most popular formulation through radical intellectuals of Occupied France who participated in the Resistance against the Nazi conquerors, experienced the exaltation of Liberation and the disillusion of the Fourth Republic. In 1947 Jean-Paul Sartre described the circumstances that impelled the writers of his circle and generation toward Existentialist themes. He contrasted the stability of victorious France between the two world wars, or at least up to 1930, with the turbulent vicissitudes from 1940 on. We created a new kind of literature, he explained, because we were

> forced by circumstances to discover the pressure of history, as Torricelli discovered atmospheric pressure, and [were] tossed by the cruelty of the time into that forlornness from where one can see our condition as man to the limit, to the absurd, to the night of unknowingness. . . . What are Camus, Malraux, Koestler, etc., now producing if not a literature of extreme situations? Their characters are at the height of power or in prison cells, on the eve of death or of being tortured or of killing. Wars, coups d'état, revolutionary action, bombardments, massacres. There you have their everyday life.

The economic recovery of capitalism did not restore calm and stability to the postwar world. The global Cold War was punctuated

by local hot wars. Anti-imperialist struggles surged through Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. De Gaulle installed his personal authoritarian regime on the tomb of the Fourth Republic.

Now the H-bomb has turned the protracted crisis of our society into a mortal crisis of mankind. This terrifying device of total destruction fits all the nightmarish specifications of the Existentialist scheme of things. Is it not the acme of irrationality that the technology and science designed by human ingenuity to serve our needs have become perverted into hellish engines of destruction? Mankind is brought face to face with the genuine prospect of nothingness. We are being driven with utmost anguish toward the ultimate decision, the most fateful of all choices: to be or not to be!

Such are the principal pressures of contemporary history that have produced and marked Existentialism. This philosophy, literature and drama of "extreme situations" owes its vogue to a forceful presentation of the excruciating contradictions that are tearing our culture asunder and intensifying the strains of everyday life. It is an expression of intense social and individual crisis. Existentialism wins an audience and adherents nowadays wherever and whenever an industrialized country is profoundly shaken up, great social questions are thrust forward for solution, and agonized people with their backs to the wall have to reexamine their whole outlook.

Another reason for the welcome accorded Existentialism has been the estrangement of professional philosophy from the concerns of everyday life. The modern university scholastics have buried themselves in purely technical and historical questions remote from the burning problems of our time. European Existentialism, like American pragmatism, aspired to close the gap between philosophical theorizing and the hot immediacies of personal existence, which appeared obliterated in the fleshless formulas of the reigning academic schools.

Its impelling purpose is to overcome the separation of thought from feeling and action by approaching the realities of life as these are undergone by struggling, suffering, uncertain human beings. It seeks to rescue the individual from the cares and horrors of a perilous world by shoring up his self-reliance and encouraging him

to fight for personal independence at all costs against the forces bent on its erosion and destruction.

The Diversity of Existentialisms

It is not easy to give a definitive summary of its doctrines because Existentialism rejects the necessity of thought and action to correspond with objective reality outside the individual. Existentialism registers a mood, an atmosphere, a special manner of responding to the emergencies of life rather than a single, carefully worked-out, internally harmonious system of thought.

The amorphousness of this viewpoint is not a deficit in the eyes of its creators and followers. Indeed, its fluidity concords with its premises. Philosophies that are based on rational and scientific method aim to represent the universe in clear, consistent and connected conceptual terms. The primary proposition of Existentialism—that *existence,* which is defined as the immediate living experience of the individual, takes priority over *essence,* that is, rational abstractions reflecting the laws, properties and relations of objective reality—militates against orderly thought. The Existentialists hold that it is far more important and imperative for the person to exert his will, choose among possible courses of action, and commit himself for better or worse to an enterprise than to gear ideas and projects into the environing conditions of action. Otherwise, the individual is false to his authentic self.

The coming philosophers, Nietzsche predicted, would not be dogmatists whose truth will be truth for everyone. "My opinion," he said in *Beyond Good and Evil,* "is *my* opinion; another person has not easily a right to it." With such boundless latitude in selecting objects of faith and adherence, the Existentialists are birds of many feathers. They belong together not because of basic agreement on their ideas and allegiances but because they have a common subjectivist approach to reality and are repelled from rationalism, determinism, materialism and scientific objectivity.

The mandate that what counts most is "good faith," whole-

hearted dedication to a freely chosen course or cause, and not to any truth anchored in a collectivity or a world beyond the individual, produces wide variations, not only in the views of its members but in the positions they hold at different times.

Their beliefs range from atheism to faith in God, from dread before death as total finality to an anticipation of life eternal. The Dane Kierkegaard was an unorthodox Protestant, the German Jaspers is a theist, the Frenchman Marcel a Catholic convert, Martin Buber a Jew. Nietzsche, who proclaimed that "God is dead," and the equally irreligious Sartre and Camus build their humanisms on a world without God. In Spain Unamuno embraced God and immortality whereas his fellow philosopher Ortega y Gasset insisted that man must be his own ultimate. Camus emphasized that man has an essential human nature that precedes his existence; Sartre maintains the opposite. The German Heidegger kneeled before Nazism while the French contingent around Sartre fought in the Resistance and aligned itself with the Left.

The extreme diversity of Existentialist conclusions springs not only from its philosophic method but from the heterogeneous interests and orientations of dislocated middle-class intellectuals uneasily wedged between the ruling powers and the broad masses of working people. They seek to find positions in ideology somewhere between idealism and materialism and in politics between capitalist reaction and scientific socialism.

Sartre agrees with such a sociological diagnosis. "Existentialism, in its contemporary form," he writes in *What is Literature?* "appears with the decomposition of the bourgeoisie, and its region is bourgeois." However, he goes on to assert that the revulsion of Existentialists like himself against bourgeois society and their urge to project positions beyond it are the mainsprings of the validity and value of this trend of thought. Its partisans are thus enabled to disclose the crucial aspects of the human condition and the present tasks of man.

The variety of Existentialist thinkers can be divided into two main categories: theists such as Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Marcel; and atheists like Nietzsche, Camus, Sartre, de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty. Existentialism has become known in this country largely through the novels, plays and other writings of this second group.

The Teachings of Marxism

At the very time that humanity trembles between life and death, illimitable prospects of progress are being opened up by science and technology. Nuclear physics promises to provide inexhaustible sources of energy. Cybernetics is automating industrial and commercial operations. Biogenetics and biochemistry are disclosing the secrets of life and may soon discover how to retard aging and death. Air transport makes neighbors of the most remote inhabitants of the globe. Instruments probe ever deeper into space as vehicles are scheduled to carry man to the moon and beyond.

Our world is undergoing its greatest transformation since agriculture and metallurgy overturned tribal life and created the earliest civilizations. We stand on the threshold of a new epoch in the advancement of mankind. The immeasurable productive possibilities of modern technology bring within reach the age-old dream of universal abundance, the reduction of backbreaking toil, the institution of satisfying and harmonious conditions of existence for every member of the human family.

Marxism is the herald of this revolutionary change in social development. As a school of thought, it was already almost a century old when Existentialism came forward to challenge its view of the world and history. Conceived in Western Europe during the rise of industrial capitalism in the middle of the nineteenth century, scientific socialism has grown as the labor movement has expanded its industrial and political organization, consciousness and independence and as the revolutionary processes of our times have spread from one country and continent to another.

Marxism first demonstrated the capacity to redirect history as well as interpret it in the Russian Revolution of October 1917, which established the Soviet Union, the first anticapitalist regime. As the revolutionary tide receded and fascism rolled over Europe after 1923, the socialist and communist movements suffered severe setbacks. But with the defeats of Mussolini and Hitler and the victories of Soviet arms, Marxism sprang up with renewed vigor. The abolition of capitalist relations in Eastern Europe and the success-

ful worker-peasant revolutions in Yugoslavia, China, North Vietnam and Cuba have immensely extended its influence.

Whereas Existentialism has its main appeal to the educated middle classes, Marxism is an avowed philosophy of the masses. Its ideas have inspired more people than any doctrine since the world religions of earlier times; its program has secured a broader following among the poor and dispossessed than the democratic movements associated with the ascendancy of bourgeois civilization. It is also embraced by members of other social groupings who have come to identify labor's struggle for emancipation from capitalism with the cause of human progress. Dissident intellectuals who are today at odds with the ruling powers and their values are often tugged between these rival philosophies.

The ideas of Marxism can be divided into three parts. These are *dialectical materialism,* its philosophy and logical method, which deals with the evolutionary process in its entirety, including nature, society and the human mind; *historical materialism,* its sociology, which investigates and formulates the laws of social development; and *scientific socialism,* its political economy, which studies the operation of the contradictory tendencies and antagonistic forces under capitalism leading to a higher form of social organization.

Marxism is above all a doctrine and directive of class struggle, political revolution and social transformation. It proceeds from the proposition that the growth of the productive forces, of which living labor is the nerve center, is the main impetus of history, the ultimate cause of all social changes and the indispensable material basis of progress. When productive forces outgrow the economic forms and social relations that previously fostered them, a new revolution to establish new economic forms and social relations is necessary if a higher grade of production is to be instituted and humanity is to move forward.

This general law of historical development explains both the world domination of capitalism as the most efficient method of wealth production known to class society and its prospective replacement by socialism. The exploitative economy and national state relations of the capitalist system are no longer capable of containing the dynamic productivity of labor inherent in modern science and technology. These economic and political restraints

stifle and pervert the prodigious powers of production, turning them more and more to evil uses.

This accounts for the unprecedented sweep and fury of the conflicts involving nations, classes and continents in this age of permanent revolution. The manifold crises, wars and revolutions of the twentieth century represent desperate efforts by the guardians of an anachronistic social order to preserve the rights, powers, privileges and profits of private property against the mighty and recurrent struggles of the working people to throw off social inequality and injustice.

Marxism presents itself as the scientific expression and practical guide of this worldwide social movement, the synthesis of its revolutionary theory and action. It relates the major antagonisms of our time on all levels—from the individual to the collective, from the philosophical to the economic—to the fundamental and irreconcilable opposition of interests between the possessing classes and the working masses. It teaches that the irrepressible contest between the forces of the old order and the new will not cease until socialism installs itself on a world scale.

This is not the first time that far-seeing representatives of progressive forces have condemned the irrationality of existing institutions and fought to get rid of them. The foremost thinkers of the French Revolution keenly felt that way about the outworn feudal regime. They attacked the supports and sanctifications of the Church, the monarchy and serfdom in order to set up a rule of reason and harmony in their stead. The most forward-looking Americans of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries held similar attitudes toward British crown rule and chattel slavery.

Marxism consciously connects itself with the traditions of these earlier movements which propelled humanity forward but fell short of fulfilling their highest aims because of the unavoidable limits imposed on economic and social development by the bourgeois character of the age. The ideals of enlightenment, justice, democracy, equality and freedom enunciated by the noblest figures of these revolutions enter into the content of its socialist humanism.

Unlike Existentialism, Marxism has a systematic structure of thought, from its dialectical and materialist view of universal development to its political and moral outlook. Its fundamental prin-

ciples were worked out in considerable detail by the creators of scientific socialism. Like all epoch-making ideologies from Christianity to liberalism and nationalism, classical Marxism has undergone both expansions and distortions since the death of its founders. When we speak here of Marxism without qualification, we refer to the original teachings of Marx and Engels.

French Existentialism

The literary left wing headquartered in Paris has been the creative center of Existentialism since the end of the Second World War. French Existentialism was publicly launched at that time with the same scandal as the dadaist and surrealist revolts after the First World War. Originating as a movement of literary rebels, it has modified the aesthetic sensibility, behavior and outlook of an entire generation of educated youth and middle-class intellectuals. Shaking up traditional literary forms, introducing new themes and treating them in a new manner, baring many hypocrisies of present-day life, Existentialism has acted as a seething ferment in the novel, the drama (through "the theater of the absurd"), and the literary criticism of the West.

The evolution of its leading figures has paralleled that of such outstanding surrealists as Breton and Aragon, Peret and Eluard, who went from individualistic iconoclasm in art and morality to social problems and revolutionary politics. However, Existentialism has, from its birth, had a much more serious theoretical foundation and exercised a far wider influence than surrealism. It has ramified into the fields of psychoanalysis, politics and philosophy.

Indeed, its career as an artistic tendency has been inseparable from its philosophical elaboration. The characters and situations in the novels and plays of the Existentialists are often transparent exemplars of their philosophical theses while the more theoretical works are direct extensions of their aesthetic credo and psychological interests.

The French philosophy of existence has issued from the conflu-

ence of two currents of thought: one stemming from Kierkegaard, Jaspers and Heidegger, the other from Husserl. The former supplied the main themes for its deliberations: the encounter with nothingness, the plunge into anguish and dread, the overcoming of mortal crisis by the assertion of the individual's absolute freedom to stake all on a risky commitment in action.

The latter is the source of its phenomenological method. This procedure turns its back, at least provisionally, upon the real social and natural environment and concentrates attention upon the states of consciousness and array of objects scrutinized by the reflecting individual. Phenomenology rests upon the direct intuition of states of mind and immediate inspection of things, not as the initial state of knowing what they are, but as conclusive evidence of their definitive nature. The introspective thinker deliberately restricts himself to phenomena as they are manifested without going on to link the appearances of things with the conditions and causes of their occurrence.

Sartre applied this method of descriptive psychology in all his early philosophical works. The most important of them, *Being and Nothingness,* is subtitled: *An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology.*

Jean-Paul Sartre occupies the central place in the contemporary debate between Existentialism and Marxism. Of equal eminence as a novelist, playwright and philosopher, he is probably the most influential living man of letters. He is indubitably the most brilliant and many-sided exponent of atheistic Existentialism.

Sartre has acquired an eminence comparable to that of Bertrand Russell as a world public figure. He has lived up to his precept that sincere men demonstrate their freedom by refusing to submit to the status quo and by wholehearted involvement in a chosen way of life. He is a man of the Left, resolved to support the poor and oppressed. Ever since he fought in the Resistance against the Nazis, he has tirelessly wielded his pen as a powerful weapon against reaction and injustice and sought to align himself with the working masses and the colonial insurgents in the major struggles of our time at home and abroad.

In the field of philosophy, Sartre is a bold and ambitious thinker. He has aspired to promote two of the chief living trends of thought to higher levels. He cultivated his branch of Existentialism in direct

competition with dialectical materialism. Then, after his Existentialist position took finished form, he sallied forth to rescue Marxism from the dogmatists and determinists, and rejuvenate it by the injection of Existentialist hormones.

Thus Sartre has passed through two distinctively different phases of philosophical evolution. In *Being and Nothingness* (1943), he is an avowed follower of the German phenomenologists who wished to perfect their techniques and extend their researches into the consciousness of individual experience. In the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), he comes forward as an adherent of Marx with the aim of perfecting historical materialism through the addition of Existentialist procedures and insights. This singular itinerary cannot be understood without tracing the twists and turns in his views from his debut as a French interpreter of German phenomenology in the 1930's and 1940's to his role as an Existentialist reconstructor of Marxism in the 1950's and 1960's.

Sartre's Evolution from Rejection to Rapprochement with Marxism

The book upon which Sartre's fame as a philosopher rests, *Being and Nothingness,* only incidentally records his initial encounter with the rival outlook of dialectical materialism. In one significant passage he singles out Marxism as a specimen of "the serious attitude." This is not a complimentary term in his vocabulary. Seriousness is the antithesis of sincerity because it attributes greater reality to the world than to oneself and looks upon man not as a free being, but as a thing no better than a rock. It is an expression of "bad faith" that hides from man the consciousness of his freedom. "Marx," Sartre wrote, "proposed the original dogma of the serious when he asserted the priority of the object over the subject. Man is serious when he takes himself for an object."

This explicit opposition to dialectical materialism's objective approach to reality indicates the method and aim of his own philosophical enterprise. Sartre set out to show that man is a wholly free

subject who, by his very nature, resists every attempt to transform him into anything objective.

The first part of *Being and Nothingness* provided the ontological underpinning for this conception of unlimited human freedom by setting forth the insurmountable conflicts between the three fundamental aspects of reality. These are being-for-itself, the pure consciousness of the individual; being-in-itself, rigid nonconsciousness, materiality and objectivity; and being-for-others, the self that is converted into an external object.

In the second section of his book, Sartre manipulates these three dimensions of being to construct what is probably the most one-sided conception of freedom in the history of philosophy. In his exposition, freedom is released from all conditions. Man's freedom is not limited by his own nature, by his passions or his motives, or by other things or people. Man is utterly at liberty to decide what he wishes to become.

Freedom for Sartre is not what is ordinarily considered as freedom, namely, the capacity to realize one's aims or attain one's desires. Freedom is rather the exercise of autonomous choice as an arbitrary act of free will. I am, to be sure, hedged in on all sides by what Sartre, after Heidegger, calls "facticity." My place, my past, my surroundings, my fellows and my death constitute the situation in which I find myself, which I did not create and for which I am not liable.

But these are accidental and incidental, not essential and necessary ingredients of my existence. I do not have to accept them; I can reject and refuse to adapt to them. I assert and establish my authentic self in dissociating myself from all these objective circumstances. Other things and beings have their essence made for them without their participation or imposed upon them without their consent. I alone have the power of creating the character and career I prefer. I can be a fully self-made person in a world I never made.

No preconditions, no authorities or precedents can determine the conduct of a person unless he permits them to do so. Every individual can be a law unto himself. We are fully responsible for the choices we make. Since we choose not only for ourselves but for others, and by implication for all mankind, the die is cast in fear

and trembling. Unlimited freedom entails unlimited liability. Sartre even holds every person then alive co-responsible for the Second World War. Anguish arises from the apprehensive recognition that the choice may be the wrong one. But since we cannot avoid choosing at our peril in the dark, we must courageously take our stand and face the music.

People who seek to escape the agony of conscious decision and disclaim responsibility for their action and its results are in "bad faith." They take refuge in endless ruses and pretexts to flee from their freedom. The supreme test of human worth is a person's attitude toward the precious privilege of doing what he wills from the innermost depths of his ego. This divides people into "stinkers," who elude the liabilities of liberty, and the "authentic" ones, who embrace these whatever the costs and consequences.

Sartre closes *Being and Nothingness* on a tragic note. He defines man as "the being who desires to be God." This is impossible because being-for-itself can never coalesce with being-in-itself. This means that man's ventures and aspirations cannot find adequate or enduring realization. "Freedom is precisely the being which makes itself a lack of being," he says. Man is fated to be free while his dearest projects are foredoomed to fail.

This assertion of an unquenchable thirst for freedom that cannot find satisfaction has been the driving force in the constitution and development of Sartre's thought. It spurred him forward from one stage to the next. His intensified social responsibility impelled this advocate of ultra-individualism to keep searching for that road which promised an enlargement of liberty for mankind, even though no real and lasting freedom was attainable.

That quest brought about his commitment to the cause of socialist revolution. Marxism is the theory and method of that movement. And so, the momentum of his Existentialist ethics, intermeshed with his situation as a radical intellectual in crisis-torn France, pressed him to come to grips with Marxism in politics and philosophy.

Sartre marshaled his most extensive arguments against Marxism in a 1946 essay on *Materialism and Revolution,* the first part of which is reprinted in this anthology. This indictment did not spare

a single one of the fundamental principles of Marxist philosophy. He rejected its claim to scientific truthfulness, its materialism, its rationalism, its determinism, its dialectical view of nature, its conception of object-subject relations, and its derivation of consciousness from social conditions.

Sartre's chief objection to materialism was that it eliminated subjectivity and reduced men to robots or objects. Such a wholesale dismissal of Marxist theory posed a vexing problem for this sympathizer with labor's cause.

If materialism robs revolutionary man of his most precious quality and deceives him by teaching that he is no better than a thing, how has this false consciousness managed to get such a hold on the working class? Sartre offers three reasons. First, working for a living by manipulating objects and changing them impresses workers with the importance of cause-effect relations and links the idea of liberation in their minds with that of determinism. Materialism, which represents the effort to drag man down to the level of things and convert him into a mere "fact of nature," is the conceptual counterpart of this practical situation.

Second, the master class, which transforms everything and everyone into its instruments, imposes its views and values upon the wage slaves, who come to see the world through the eyes of their oppressors. Third and most important, although materialism is an illusion, it usefully encourages the workers in their struggle to overthrow bourgeois domination. Thus Sartre provisionally and partially justifies materialism on pragmatic grounds.

Marx, through his materialist conception of the world, his interpretation of history and his analysis of capitalist development, had rid the socialist movement of its idealist errors and Utopian defects and given it a scientific foundation. By asserting that dialectical materialism was a blind belief, a revolutionary myth, Sartre sought to reverse the progress of socialist ideology.

To be sure, this throwback from positive knowledge to mythology was for Sartre not so damaging or dangerous as for those who demanded that social ideas and political programs correspond to objective realities rather than subjective aspirations. He attached less value to science and more potency to myth than the Marxist sociologists.

However helpful the myth of materialism may be, it is not necessary, Sartre continued. It can and should be replaced by a better philosophy that will be created by the revolutionary act. This new philosophy of freedom would not rely upon a knowledge of the laws of nature and society to guide the activity of labor, as Marxism wrongly does. It will enable "man to invent his own law" as he goes along. Instead of degrading man into an object, his projected theory would raise everyone to the dignified rank worthy of free beings.

Sartre advanced his own philosophy of existence as the theoretical charter for a socialist humanism of universal scope. Unlike dialectical materialism, it would be more than a narrow philosophy of the proletariat; it would be the "creed of all men," even of the enlightened bourgeois, who is also the victim of his own system of oppression.

In *The Condition of the Working Class in England,* published in 1845, Engels had held that "Communism stands, in principle, above the breach between the bourgeoisie and proletariat" and "is a question of humanity and not of the workers alone." Along with Marx, he soon abandoned this philanthropic humanism for the materialist doctrine of the class struggle as the essence of revolutionary socialism. By recoiling against this century-old materialism, Sartre, in the 1940's, unwittingly reverted to a standpoint similar to that held by the young Engels in the early 1840's.

So, at this midpoint of his political-theoretical career, Sartre was the proponent of a pre-Marxian socialist humanism, clad in Existentialist terms, that he offered as the predestined replacement for the false and outmoded doctrines of dialectical materialism.

The second phase of Sartre's philosophical development is apparently a negation of the first. After refuting and rejecting dialectical materialism, he kept grappling with it. He had either to conquer Marxism or to be conquered by it.

In *Search for a Method* he tells how a first reading of Marx's works failed to convince him. "What did begin to change me was the *reality* of Marxism, the heavy pressure on my horizon of the masses of workers, an enormous, somber body which *lived* Marxism, which *practiced* it, and which at a distance exercised an

irresistible attraction on petit bourgeois intellectuals." How was he to square his support for the proletarian revolution with his disbelief in scientific socialism?

Sartre first tried to solve this dilemma by using Existentialism as a battering ram to overthrow the theoretical foundations of Marxism. When this frontal assault proved no more successful than his efforts to set up a political center of the Left apart from the traditional parties, he turned about and transformed himself into an adherent of Marxism. He claimed that his branch of Existentialism could rescue and renew the original ideas of Marx, which had been misinterpreted and mishandled by his official disciples.

This is the avowed aim of his second major philosophical treatise, the *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* published in 1960. In the first section of this work, translated as *Search for a Method,* Sartre redefines the relations between his philosophy of existence and Marxism.

In every epoch of social advance the ascending class creative of the future projects its own view of the world as a social and political weapon that is destined to domination. The only viable world outlook in our time is Marxism, Sartre asserts. It is "the ultimate philosophy of our age."

Marx surpassed both Hegel and Kierkegaard by incorporating their valid insights—the affirmation of the specificity of human existence in the first case and the concrete man in his reality in the second—into his system of thought. This should have assured the permanent eclipse of Existentialism.

However, Marxism since Marx has "come to a stop." Contemporary Marxism has stagnated and retrogressed because it has become institutionalized as an instrument in the hands of the opportunistic Soviet bureaucracy, which divorced theory from practice, transformed the flexible dialectic into petrified dogmatism, and shaped its policies according to an unprincipled pragmatism.

All of Marx's disciples, from Engels through Kautsky, Plekhanov and Lenin to Stalin, Trotsky and their French followers, have slighted the individuality of facts and the originality of living history. They failed to imitate the example of Marx, who appraised and analyzed every process, event and person as a unique whole.

The inability of orthodox Marxists to grasp the absolutely irreducible character of the particular historical happening, their pernicious habit of submerging its singularities in abstract generalities drawn from previous experiences make it "legitimate and necessary to resuscitate Existentialism." This method can rejuvenate a sclerotic Marxism by infusing it with a sensitivity to the concreteness of human existence and a concern for the particular.

Thus Sartrean Existentialism has its place as an autonomous province within Marxism. It has the special assignment of liberating this method from the abstractionists, who "forced individuals and facts into prefabricated moulds," and of replenishing it through a clear understanding of the dialectical relations of the individual to society and history.

One wonders why, if Marx himself demonstrated in his historical studies that pristine Marxism was fully capable of doing justice to the originality of events, Existentialism has to be brought in as a supplement. Wouldn't it suffice to scrape away the accretions of the misrepresenters in order to restore authentic Marxism and apply it?

This will not do because Sartre really has something else in view than correcting the deviators and filling out the shortcomings of historical materialism. Instead of subordinating Existentialism to Marxism, as he promises, he virtually dissolves Marxism into Existentialism. This becomes evident in the second part of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* where he endeavors to demonstrate the superiority of his multidimensional approach in connection with the sociology of the individual and his special conception of the historical process.

Sartre picks and chooses those parts of Marxism he considers valid. While now accepting materialism in general, he continues to reject the dialectical view of nature. However, he has modified his attitude toward this fundamental feature of Marxism. It may be, he says, that science will some day prove that nature conforms to laws of dialectics. But since at present this is only a hypothetical possibility, it had better be set aside.

History, where human practice prevails, is the only field where dialectical developments take place and dialectical thought is applicable. However, Sartre's version of the dialectics of history does not coincide with that of the creators of scientific socialism.

First of all, his aim is different. Marx sought to discover and formulate the laws that regulate the development of society from the origins of man to the advent of socialism. These laws express the causal relations that determined the rise and fall of the successive forms of social organization and their transition into one another.

Sartre does not look for the objective laws of the evolution and interconnection of historical and social phenomena but rather for what he calls their "dialectical totalization." By this he means the integration of the individual with his situation in a perpetual process of becoming. Sartre substitutes a subjective dialectic that proceeds from the individual to the structure of society for the objective dialectic of the historical process set forth by Marx.

Starting from the separate individual, Sartre goes on to examine how he and his equally isolated ("serialized") fellows become socialized or totalize themselves by forming ties and creating relations of various kinds, ranging from a voluntary "group in fusion" to an "organized" group developing into a socioeconomic institution, a movement, party or state.

This approach to history is altogether different from that of Marx, which proceeded not from individual action but from social practice, the working collective of whatever kind in its struggle with nature. Marxism views the activities, relations, will and consciousness of the individual as fundamentally shaped by the aggregate conditions of life and labor imposed upon him by the social system. The dialectical process of history is based upon the dynamics of the productive forces, which are first promoted and then retarded by a given mode of production. The most powerful individual is governed by this objective process.

Sartre, however, subordinates social relations and historical forces to the autonomy of the individual. The given situation can only limit the possibilities of his freedom but cannot compel his action or decision. He regards social evolution as a succession of freely made choices, not as the necessary unfolding of different degrees of man's productive power in his collective struggle with nature for existence.

Sartre also presents a different conception of the prime motive force of history from the theory of historical materialism. He ar-

gues that scarcity, the negation within man of man by matter, is the "intelligible dialectical principle" that has imparted dynamism to the historical process, directed the course of social development, and shaped the nature of human intercourse from primitive times to the present. The brutal struggle for survival under the whip of an insufficiency of food and other material goods has made man a wolf to man.

For Marx the driving force of history does not come from the existence of scarcity, a negative aspect of the social economy, but from a more positive factor, the development of the productive forces and their changing connections with the relations of production. Marx did not deny that material want and the resultant insecurity were the lot of food-gatherers and hunters. But he also pointed out that the cooperative organization of labor and the more or less equitable distribution of products at this primitive stage of economic development gave rise to relations, customs and sentiments of a powerful solidarity and fraternity. Sartre ignores this highly important aspect of life among the collectives of tribespeople and kinfolk during the earliest stage of human history.

The picture he gives of mankind in "the world of scarcity" through the ages is far more consonant with the ideas of Hobbes, Malthus and the Social Darwinians than those of Marx. The "dog-eat-dog" state of conflict he portrays does apply to class societies, which replaced primitive collectivism. But Sartre's theory fails to explain the causes of this great historical transition. It was not the persistence of scarcity but the emergence of an excess of wealth over and above the basic necessities that formed the economic basis of class society and supplied the driving force of the class struggle. The agricultural and metallurgical revolutions created a growing surplus of wealth, which, with the expansion of exchange relations and money, led to the breakup of tribal equality in favor of social distinctions, inequalities, and class cleavages. Since then, class conflicts have pivoted around the contest for the possession, control and distribution of this social surplus.

Whereas Marxism views the social structure and the state power that serves it as primarily rooted in specific relations of production and property forms, for Sartre they are based on violence and "fra-

ternity-terror." Of special interest is the way he applies his theory to the post-Lenin period in the Soviet Union. Temporarily forsaking his Existentialist indeterminism, Sartre maintains that there was no real alternative to Stalin as the sovereign leader after Lenin's death. "Historical experience has undeniably revealed that the first movement of socialist society in the process of construction could only be . . . the indissoluble aggregation of the bureaucracy, the Terror, and the personality cult."

This is an anomalous position for a thinker to whom history is the result of free choices. There were, of course, sufficient reasons for the rise and triumph of Stalinism. However, it is not only unexistentialist but undialectical to hold, as Sartre does, that any other path of development was *a priori* excluded or to imply that no other policy was feasible for revolutionists. Where historical necessity is at work, it is still possible to discriminate between its progressive and reactionary trends and choose between them, even though they are unequally matched. In fact, an alternative course was proposed and fought for by the Left Opposition to Stalin. By denying any possible effectiveness to it, Sartre lapses into a rigid determinism and historical fatalism, which is tantamount to a rationalization for the rule of the Soviet bureaucracy.

In his latest work, Sartre actually adopts not much more of Marxism than the ideas that a revolution is required to bring about the overthrow of capitalism and that the working class is the agency of revolution in the advanced industrial countries.

Sartre says that, by fixing its gaze upon us, the Other deprives us of our authentic being and lures us into bad faith by imposing alien and false values upon us. This is a paradigm of what he does to scientific socialism in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. In trying to remodel dialectical materialism along Existentialist lines, he violates the integrity of its being and converts it into something other than it is. Instead of a de-Stalinized and revitalized Marxism, he presents an individualistic and nonmaterialistic version of Marxism set in the framework of Existentialist assumptions. Is this not, in his own terms, a sign of philosophical "bad faith"?

Puzzled and perturbed by the discrepancies between Sartre the phenomenologist, and Sartre the quasi-Marxist, many admirers

have asked: Which is the "real" Sartre? Is he the philosopher of existence who condemned dialectical materialism as false and a foe to freedom, or the latter-day ideologist who intends to synthesize Marxism and Existentialism?

The inconsistencies that permeate his philosophizing are explicable as the efforts of an unanchored French intellectual, tugged in different directions by conflicting forces and ideas, to find a satisfactory revolutionary solution to the major problems of his time. His discordant positions represent successive approximations to that goal.

Sartre tells us that, to know the mainsprings of a personality, we must uncover by analysis of his deeds the fundamental project he has chosen. Applying this directive to his own philosophical work, we see that he took as his prime theoretical task the affirmation of human freedom against all the obstacles that threatened to restrict or nullify it and to do this by divorcing consciousness from material circumstances.

At first he believed that freedom could be guaranteed only through an uncompromising proclamation of the autonomy of the individual. When this metaphysic of the sovereign personality failed to square with his further experiences of social and political reality in the struggle for revolutionary change, he became persuaded that Marxism was the only effective doctrine that pointed the way to the liberation of man.

This turnabout in midcareer was reflected both in his politics and in his philosophy. Sartre had concluded *Being and Nothingness* with the assertion that man's godlike aim of harmonizing freedom with the world of fact and being-for-others could never be attained. This conclusion failed to satisfy his craving for closer ties between the individual and society, particularly between himself and the working masses. In the further quest for this unity, he has been impelled to move away from historical idealism toward historical materialism, from excessive subjectivity toward greater objectivity, from ultra-individualism toward collectivism, from solitude toward solidarity.

Yet in neither of these phases has this restless thinker managed to reach solid ground or a stable resting place. Both as a pure Existentialist and as a neo-Marxist, his positions are full of ten-

sions between opposing ideas that he has striven with undiminished tenacity but increasing difficulty to resolve.

Sartre and the Communists

As a political personage, Sartre is the preeminent representative in our time of a widespread type—the university-trained, middle-class intellectual who has repudiated bourgeois rulership, sides with the oppressed, and is a convinced socialist. Such individuals do not find it easy to discard all former social ties and habits and completely to integrate themselves into the workers' movement. Since the 1920's that task has been rendered more difficult by the Stalinization of the Soviet Union and the Communist parties.

Unlike such a close friend as the Communist writer Paul Nizan, Sartre abstained from political activity throughout the 1920's and 1930's. Simone de Beauvoir remarks in the third volume of her autobiography:

> In our youth we felt close to the Communist party to the extent that its negativism harmonized with our anarchism. We looked forward to the defeat of capitalism but not to the coming of a socialist society which, we thought, would have deprived us of our liberty. Thus on September 14, 1939 [following the Stalin-Hitler pact] Sartre wrote in a notebook: "Here I am cured of socialism if ever I needed to be cured of it." [1]

Sartre changed his mind after being mobilized into the army. His experience in a prisoner-of-war camp taught him the worth of solidarity. By February, 1940, he felt he could no longer remain aloof from politics. The small and short-lived Resistance group of intellectuals he helped organize in 1941 was baptized "Socialism and Liberty." These no longer appeared antithetical to him.

Sartre did not emulate the young man he speaks of "who leaves his social class, family and home and gives himself, naked and

[1] Translated by the Editor.

alone, to the Party." He has remained a free lance of the Left who would not adhere to any of the political establishments of the working class.

When Sartre was ready for politics, the Communists had shouldered aside the Socialists and emerged as the most dynamic and decisive force on the French Left. He collaborated on friendly terms with the Communist fighters in the National Liberation Front during 1943–44, despite the circulation of malicious rumors that he had been released from imprisonment to inform for the Nazis.

After the Liberation, he was obliged to define his relation to the CP publicly and more precisely. With Merleau-Ponty, his associate in the Resistance and political mentor, he maintained that "the Communist party is the only revolutionary party." While aligning themselves with it, they decided to remain unaffiliated and critical of it since they did not share its philosophy nor approve all its policies. They believed that an individual who valued truth above expediency could not submit to the party's dictates and discipline, or acquiesce in its errors and falsifications.

Since then Sartre has moved in what he calls "the marginal zone of the Communist party." From 1944 on, he played an independent role in the ideological life of the French Left through the newspaper *Combat,* edited by Camus, and the magazine *Les Temps Modernes,* which he published with Simone de Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, and some others with whom he has parted political company.

The problem of what attitude to adopt toward the CP was not Sartre's alone; it has plagued his entire generation of the French Left up to this day. In *The Mandarins,* Simone de Beauvoir describes the tormented consciences of the members of their circle as they wrestled with their mistaken identification of the cause of the Revolution with Stalin's regime and the French CP. Their predicament was formulated in the statement made by Merleau-Ponty in 1947: "One cannot be a Communist, one cannot be anti-Communist." J. M. Domenach, editor of the Left Catholic organ, *Esprit,* nailed down this dilemma in July, 1955: "One cannot be a revolutionist outside an alliance with the CP, an alliance that is impossible so long as the party is what it is."

Over the past twenty years Sartre has tried various ways of coping with this awkward situation without arriving at a definite solution. Alternately fascinated and repelled by the CP, he has, existentially speaking, manifested an antipathetic sympathy and a sympathetic antipathy toward it.

In 1948, together with the ex-Trotskyists David Rousset and Gerard Rosenthal, he founded a short-lived independent socialist group, the Revolutionary Democratic Rally, which published thirteen issues of a biweekly newspaper, *La Gauche*. In a joint *Conversations on Politics* that appeared early in 1949, Sartre explained that he did not aim to start another party but to provide a meeting place for people who were frustrated by the lack of free discussion and the regimentation of the workers and intellectuals inside the CP. He disclosed that its Central Committee had balked every initiative he had taken with disgruntled members to liberalize the party atmosphere.

The Korean conflict, which stoked the Cold War, first paralyzed, then broke up the editorship of *Les Temps Modernes*. Its political director, Merleau-Ponty, who had been closer to the CP than Sartre despite his reservations about it, had grown more and more dubious about the socialism of the Soviet Union. In 1949 he was instrumental in publishing an exposé of the Russian forced-labor camps. The outbreak of the Korean War the next year convinced him that the Stalinized Soviet Union had turned into a police state pursuing a Bonapartist foreign policy. He resigned as editor-in-chief in 1952, ending his intimate political partnership with Sartre.

Sartre underwent an opposing conversion. While Merleau-Ponty was recoiling from the horror of Stalinism, he was discovering, he says, the horror of his own bourgeoisie. The viciousness of the French troops and colonialists in Indo-China and the official repressions of Communists in France roused his indignation. Returning from Italy to France, he dashed off at white-heat the first of three articles on *The Communists and Peace*.

These were condemned, by those who measured everything by Western anti-Communist standards, as evidence of his complete and permanent capitulation to the CP. Sartre saw them as a pledge of his irrevocable rupture with capitalism. "In the name of the principles which it had inculcated in me, in the name of its human-

ism and of its 'humanities,' in the name of liberty, equality, fraternity, I vowed a hatred for the bourgeoisie that would last to the end of my days," he wrote in his eulogy of Merleau-Ponty a decade later.

In these articles Sartre argued that the CP was the necessary expression of the French workers and the Revolution because it alone was full of life and received their support. The workers could exist as a class only by obeying the orders of the CP leaders. The world working class rightly accepted the military authority of the Soviet leaders "because the present circumstances of its struggle, the power of the workers' organizations and the extension of the zone of conflict demand that it should submit to a centralizing and dictatorial power on a world scale."

This justification of the Stalinist line consummated Sartre's break, not only with his past, but with Camus and other former co-workers. In this submissive fellow-traveling phase, he went so far as to protest the staging of his play *Red Gloves* during the 1954 Congress of the Movement for Peace in Vienna.

This period of uninhibited conciliation with the CP was abruptly ended when Soviet tanks repressed the Hungarian revolt in 1956. In revulsion Sartre broke off relations with his Communist friends who did not condemn the intervention.

> One cannot have any friendship for the leading faction of the Soviet Bureaucracy; it is horror that dominates. . . . As for the men who at this time lead the French CP, it is not, it will never be, possible to re-establish relations. Every one of their statements, every one of their actions, is the fulfillment of thirty years of lying and sclerosis. Their reactions are completely irresponsible.

In November, 1956, Sartre projected the political perspective of a reconstituted Popular Front:

> If the Communists who oppose dictatorship had the strength to impose a change of policy, and if the socialist minority developed new principles by itself, one could find a Popular Front of a new type in which the mediating element would be the New Left.

Instead of this New Left regroupment, De Gaulle's personal

authoritarian regime came to rule over France. Sartre was still further alienated from the Thorez leadership of the CP by its indifference to the Algerian fight for independence.

Today he deposits his hope for a rebirth of authentic revolutionism in the countries of the Third World, from China to Cuba, that have cast off capitalist relations. Meanwhile he is watchfully waiting to see how far the de-Stalinization processes will go in liberalizing the Soviet bloc and softening the rigidity of the French CP, which has been most resistant to the currents of change.

His relations with the Communist movement are not once for all settled. On the deaths of Thorez and Togliatti in 1964, he made flattering references to the careers of these leaders long devoted to Stalinism. Although he may demur at such determinism, the further development of his attitude will depend not so much upon his own free will as upon coming world and national events of an even greater magnitude than those responsible for his erratic political course to date.

The Communist Attitude Toward Sartre

Despite their collaboration in the Resistance, the French Communist leaders regarded the radical Existentialists with great suspicion. They had political as well as doctrinal reasons for their hostility.

In the post-Liberation period, Existentialist moods and ideas captivated many rebellious-thinking youth of France and became the principal competitors of Marxism. The influence of the Sartreans extended into the intellectual periphery of the party. Along with their popular literary and theatrical productions, the Existentialist spokesmen set forth distinctive views on questions of the day through organs of opinion like *Combat* and *Les Temps Modernes,* which were sometimes at variance with the Communist line. By providing an alternative rallying point for students, intellectuals and radicalized middle-class elements, the Existentialist independents endangered the dominance of the French CP.

Their presence was most irksome whenever they criticized the CP from a more radical standpoint. From 1944 to the spring of 1947, the CP aimed to integrate itself with the new capitalist government. It called upon the workers' militias to disarm, stressed the necessity of maximum production above everything, and forbade strikes through its control of the General Confederation of Labor. Communist ministers served in the tripartite cabinet, preached class unity and harmony, and lauded De Gaulle as a paladin of democracy. Those on the Left who refused to go along uncritically with this reformism were stigmatized as "crypto-Trotskyists" by the Communist press.

When the French Communists were ousted from the cabinet in 1947 and entered into opposition to the regime, their ideologists did not abate their animosity toward the Existentialists. Under Zhdanov, Stalin's commissar who called the tune in cultural matters, every shade of thought that failed to comply one hundred percent with the prevailing Kremlin line was branded as ultrareactionary. Sartre's philosophy was as fiercely attacked in France as John Dewey's in the United States.

The most assiduous CP theoreticians—Henri Mougin, Jean Kanapa, Roger Garaudy, Henri Lefebvre and others—sallied forth to combat and counteract the ideas of the Existentialists. Although their polemics contained some effective criticism of Existentialist views, they were distorted and spoiled by Stalinist invective, wild charges, and blanket indictments.

The Communists bracketed Sartre with the pro-Nazi Heidegger. In his *Existentialism Is Not a Humanism,* Kanapa, Sartre's former pupil, who had contributed to the first issue of *Les Temps Modernes,* excoriated the Existentialists as "liars, enemies of the people, enemies of man" in the style of prosecutor Vishinsky in the Moscow trials. Even Lefebvre, whose arguments were generally on a higher level, asserted that "the relation of Existentialism to dialectical materialism is that between ideological mystification to the reality that it mystifies. That is also the relation of national socialism to scientific socialism." Lefebvre was to apologize for the rancorous tone of his side in the controversy after being expelled from the party in 1957.

Sartre has spoken bitterly of those Communist intellectuals who

often assented to his criticisms of the party in private while assailing them publicly at the command of the leadership. Their campaign of insults and misrepresentations made it extremely difficult for *Les Temps Modernes* to carry out its policy of critical support for the CP.

Sartre found much more sympathy for his position among the Italian than among the French Communist cadres. The latter moderated their hostility toward him after he participated in Moscow's international peace movement. In 1952 Sartre was brought still closer to the CP by the book he wrote in defense of Henri Martin, a Communist sailor who had been sentenced to five years' solitary confinement at hard labor for distributing leaflets against the war in Indo-China.

This rapprochement was shattered by the Hungarian events, which he described as an intolerable resurrection of "Stalin's ghost." The servile French CP officials would not tolerate any protest inside or outside their ranks against the Soviet repression.

However, as Moscow's policy of peaceful coexistence has unfolded, Communist intransigence toward Sartre has noticeably relented. Soviet scholars now discuss Existentialist writings with considerable objectivity. Roger Garaudy, the ideological bellwether of the French CP who consigned Sartre to the graveyard in 1948, has treated him with unctuous politeness and camaraderie in recent years. In *Perspectives of Man,* his 1959 book on the main currents of thought in contemporary France, designed to explore "possible inferences in a common effort to grasp man in his totality," Garaudy invited Sartre to comment on his critical appraisal of Existentialism.

Garaudy's concluding judgment on Sartre's philosophy indicates how much the official posture has changed. Even though we cannot go beyond an exchange of ideas, he wrote, "the nature of the problems posed would suffice to make *Being and Nothingness* one of the most important philosophical events in France over the past half-century." This is a far cry from the contemptuous dismissal of Sartre's ideas in the Billingsgate polemics of the Stalin-Zhdanov era.

The De-Stalinization of Philosophy in the Soviet Bloc

While the leading Left Existentialists, such as Sartre, Camus and Merleau-Ponty were taking divergent political orientations during the 1950's, the de-Stalinization processes were changing intellectual life in the Communist world.

During the period of "the personality cult," the Stalinist version of Marxism-Leninism monopolized philosophic thought. This commanding position was maintained more by administrative pressure and state coercion than by its demonstrated superiority to other schools of thought. The critical essence of materialist dialectics that recognizes no absolutes or sacred cows was encased in a hardened dogmatism and scholasticism alien to its nature. Submission to authority and the ritualistic repetition of passages from Marx, Lenin and Stalin replaced independent and fresh analysis of problems. The best minds had to hail the Soviet dictator as the outstanding and irrefutable philosopher of the epoch and burn incense to his genius in their books and speeches. Non-Marxist theories were banned while the history of philosophy was trimmed and twisted to suit the ideological expediencies of the ruling party.

This intolerable bondage of critical and creative thought was one of the stimulants in the "revolt of the intellectuals" that surged through the Soviet bloc after Stalin's death. Angry Communist and non-Communist intellectuals of the new and older generations joined hands to resist the regimentation that manacled their minds. They protested against police and party control over intellectual life, the total lack of free expression in the press and institutions of learning, the imposition of the canons of "socialist realism" on the creative arts and the restrictions upon science and research in fields ranging from physics and biology to economics and sociology. Their demands for an end to official interference and greater freedoms at home were coupled with calls for renewed communication and contacts with the West. After stifling so long in the stale atmosphere of bureaucratic conformism, they panted for fresh air to breathe.

Hungary and Poland became the main centers of intellectual

revolt. The ferment in Hungary culminated in the debates at the Petöfi Circle in Budapest from March to October, 1956, where party economists, philosophers, journalists, scientists, and poets spelled out their festering grievances. They clamored for freedom of thought and speech, for changes in official policies and even in the government itself. These meetings, attended by students and army officers, white-collar and industrial workers, became a self-appointed parliament voicing the dissidence that burst forth in the mass rebellion of October.

The most renowned living exponent of Marxist philosophy and aesthetics in the Communist world, Professor Georg Lukacs, participated in these agitated discussions. In an address given June 14, 1956, on *Contemporary Questions of Philosophy,* he denounced the state's cultural policy and the "uncultured and stupid" parrots who substituted citations for critical thought in philosophy. He exhorted his audience to rely on "independent thinking" and warned them against collecting quotations from Lenin as they had done with Stalin. He condemned any monopoly of dialectical materialism in the teaching of philosophy and recommended that not only the materialists but the great idealists be studied. And he indicated that Marxist-Leninist ideas as taught in the Stalinist school had failed to conquer the minds of Hungarian youth.

Lukacs became Minister of Education in the short-lived government of Imre Nagy during the October revolutionary days. After the Soviet repression, he was arrested in Budapest and detained by the Russians in a Rumanian castle. Treated like an honored guest one day and a felon the next, he is reported to have remarked: "So Kafka is a realist after all." Upon his release from captivity and return to Hungary, he preferred to keep quiet rather than retract his heresies.

Lukacs has been branded by the neo-Stalinists as the most prominent spokesman for "revisionism" among the older generation of Marxist scholars in East Europe, and he has in fact occupied right-wing positions on a number of key political questions. At a meeting of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on October 22, 1958, the party philosopher Bela Fogarasi declared that Lukacs' political mistakes could not be dissociated from his "absolutely anti-Marxist and revisionist" philosophical views.

However, in the recent resurgence of liberalization in Hungary, the venerable thinker has taken revenge upon his detractors. Breaking a seven-year silence, he gave an interview to a Prague paper in which he upheld free expression for "everything short of the aggressive denial of socialism." He unreservedly condemned the Stalin regime, "which systematically and contemptuously rendered null and void even the basic minimum of requisites of humanity." He said, "We must show the world that true Marxism was not Stalinism."

Lukacs published one of the most searching studies of Existentialism in the Soviet bloc. However, his influence upon the radical Existentialists has actually been somewhat complicated. His first major Marxist work, *History and Class Consciousness,* published in 1923, was severely criticized by the Bolsheviks for its idealist tendencies, its denial that the laws of dialectics applied to nature as well as society, and its limitation of historical materialism to bourgeois society. Lukacs sincerely acknowledged the validity of these criticisms and in subsequent writings, including his refutation of Existentialism in 1947, adopted more orthodox theoretical positions as his own.

On the other hand, the Left Existentialists have found great merit in his earlier work as an interpretation of Marxist method. They agreed with its attacks upon the vulgarization of Marxism by the Soviet Communists, its restriction of dialectics to human history, its definition of historical materialism as "the self-consciousness of capitalist society," and other deviations from classical Marxism.

The impact of de-Stalinization upon Communist philosophy in Poland has been most notably mirrored in the differing responses of Adam Schaff and Leszeck Kolakowski. Both are on the faculty of philosophy at Warsaw University, the heart of Polish intellectual activity. Schaff, the elder, is a member of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers Party and the most capable and flexible academic defender of its line. He has made serious efforts to trim his sails to the fresh breezes of intellectual emancipation that have pervaded Polish life since the lifting of the worst repression. Even more than Premier Gomulka, he has sought to steer a middle course between the unregenerate right-wing dogmatists and the revisionist innovators.

The younger Professor Kolakowski also belongs to the Polish Workers Party and is editor of the leading Polish philosophical periodical, the bimonthly organ of the Polish Academy of Sciences, *Studia Filozoficzne*. He has boldly challenged wrong actions of the party and, in revulsion against them, has come to question certain of the basic postulates of Marxism.

After the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet party, Schaff admitted that the Communists had to expose and correct the grave errors and even crimes they had committed in the conduct of science and in the ideological field that had discredited Marxism and aroused hostility among the intellectuals. But he wished to keep the necessary reforms within the framework of Marxist doctrine and the requirements of Gomulka's policies.

Kolakowski was not so restrained. This former Stalinist aroused a furore in Poland by his scathing assaults upon the ossification of Communist thought. In an article published in September, 1956, on *The Intellectuals and the Communist Movement,* Kolakowski demanded that Marxism evolve with the times. He wrote:

> Whenever a theory is turned into a rigid doctrine, the process necessarily leads to its being transformed into a mythology, which then becomes the object of a cult and pious veneration and excludes all criticism. Any theoretical progress is made impossible, and new dogmas, which emerge, are monopolized, and, without any good reason, made part of the accepted creed. Under such conditions humiliating banalities are accepted as scientific achievements. . . .
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> Communist intellectuals are faced with the task of fighting for the laicization of thought, against Marxist mythology and bigotry, against political practices of a religious and magical character and for the restoration of respect for a secular rationalism bound by no suppositions. . . .
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> The Communist party does not need intellectuals so that they can get enthusiastic over the wisdom of its decisions but so that they can ensure that the decisions are wise.

Kolakowski took exception to the official position on the questions of historical determinism and the relations between politics and morality. He held that the appeal to the imperatives of the class struggle as interpreted by the infallible leader, the omniscient

party and the all-powerful state became the theoretical charter for the abominations of Stalinism.

The categorical determinism of orthodox Marxism, he believes, obliterates the importance of the individual's role in history, deprives him of rational freedom, and wipes out moral responsibility. Men must be able to decide and act in complete and conscious freedom without regard to their class position and interclass relations if they are to be accountable for their deeds.

Kolakowski insists that personal moral judgments are not to be derived from or checked by the objective criteria of the class struggle for socialism. Moral values stand above social and economic conditions. They are acts of individual will. The individual's conscience, and not class interests, is the supreme criterion, the highest court of judgment of political action. This voluntaristic theory of morality severed from and counterposed to the conditions and considerations of the revolutionary movement brought Kolakowski closer to Sartre than to Marx.

Because of Kolakowski's ethical Communism and stinging criticisms, Gomulka and *Pravda* have singled him out as the principal banner-bearer of philosophical revisionism in Poland. "By his revisionist longing, Comrade Kolakowski has won the attention of the bourgeois and Trotskyist press," said the First Party Secretary at the ninth plenary session of the Communist Central Committee in May, 1957. "They print articles of his which are prohibited in Poland by the censor. . . . All revisionist theories are similar to one another, for they come from the same source: from the same bourgeois ideology under whose influence social democratic ideology was formed."

Nevertheless, Kolakowski has an ardent following among dissenting students and young intellectuals who are fiercely opposed to the remnants or revival of regimentation and disappointed with the halfhearted reforms and relapses of Gomulka's regime. Before, during and after the Polish October, the youth had taken the initiative through their satirical theaters, cabarets, discussion clubs and journals in submitting to searching scrutiny all those aspects of Polish Communism which they considered objectionable. In the process many have also been inclined to reject historical materialism, the class struggle, democratic centralism and other prin-

ciples of Marx and Lenin. One of their most popular plays was entitled: *Thinking Has a Colossal Future*. In 1956 their most outspoken publication, the Warsaw weekly *Po Pustu,* insisted that Marxism be "subjected to the same methods of scientific verification as any other field of thought" and that its sponsors "must never cease to confirm it with facts, revising and developing it whenever necessary."

The high hopes of those exhilarating days have since shriveled as Gomulka's government cracked down on the media of independent expression, including *Po Pustu,* and frowned upon the unhampered exercise of dissent that gave it birth.

Kolakowski's heresies and the disillusion with the halting pace of change induced Schaff to write a series of articles on the problems posed by the revisionists. As he explained in the 1963 English edition of this work:

> The political and moral shocks of 1955–57 created in Poland a growth of interest in the problems of the individual, especially among the younger intellectuals. And from this ensued a rapid growth of the influence of Existentialism, since it was the only philosophy which seemed to concentrate on answering the questions raised. To oppose this tendency became for Marxists, therefore, not only a theoretical but a political necessity. And this demanded not only a reasoned and convincing philosophical criticism of Existentialism but a positive treatment from the Marxist standpoint of the same problems.

Schaff polemicized both against Sartre's attempt to amalgamate Existentialism with Marxism and against the Communist thinkers who sought to substitute non-class personal morality for historical materialism as the theoretical foundation of socialism.

At the same time Schaff admitted that the revisionists and Existentialists had raised important questions that Marxists had neglected and ought to answer. "What is the meaning of life? Is man free to choose between alternative lines of action? What does it mean for man to be free to make decisions? Of what consists an individual's responsibility for his decisions, particularly in situations of conflict? What is one to do in situations where every decision leads to results considered right from one point of view

and wrong from another? What does the evaluation of our actions depend on, and how well grounded are such evaluations? How shall we live so that our actions may be evaluated positively? What is the status of the individual in society and in the world surrounding him?"

Moral and philosophical questions of this sort have acquired urgent importance in the East European countries. The collapse of the ideology of official Communism provoked a profound crisis of conscience among critical-minded Communists. After losing faith in the infallibility of Stalin, they no longer knew what to believe or whom to trust. The partial de-Stalinization measures of the Communist rulers from Khrushchev to Tito have raised more questions than they have answered. They have accordingly been thrown back upon their own resources and forced to reconsider all their former views and values. This is a genuine Existentialist showdown!

The agony of their unresolved ideological predicament was recently expressed by a young philosophy professor in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius who was asked to clarify some of the contradictions of the de-Stalinization process. He ended by breaking into tears. "But one must have a world view," he murmured. "If dialectical materialism is false, must one believe in God again?"

This mood of intense questioning and agonizing reappraisal has coincided with an influx of Western influences from which the Communist countries were cut off during the Stalin era. Intellectual and bohemian youth have discovered and embraced the ideas of Existentialism along with the novels of Hemingway and Faulkner, Kafka and Camus, blue jeans, jazz and the twist. Existentialism had formerly been scorned as a pernicious product of bourgeois decadence and despair that every right-thinking Communist would shun. The Polish Catholic thinkers criticized Sartre for his "philosophy of freedom" as firmly as the Marxist-Leninists did. Thus his ideas had the allure of forbidden fruit.

More seriously, the heroic pessimism of the radical Existentialists chimed in with the prevailing sense of anguish, hopelessness and defeat that was counteracted by the desire to establish a viable philosophy of life on fresh foundations. The Existentialist insistence on freedom as the essence of man; its emphasis upon personal

responsibility for social and political actions; its concern for the rights and claims of the individual against the ultra-coercive state and the omnipotent party strongly appealed to the aspirations of young rebels in search of a new outlook. Its call for complete honesty and sincerity dovetailed with their indignant moral protest against official cant, smugness, deceit and double-dealing. The nonconformist, individualist spirit of Existentialism became one of the strongest sources of its attraction in their revulsion against regimentation.

Sartre's treatise, *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* originated in the request of a Polish review for an authoritative exposition of "The Situation of Existentialism in 1957." Only a few of the dissident intellectuals have adopted the Existentialist viewpoint outright as a replacement for Communist ideology. Most of them have simply borrowed a few of its ideas in their recoil against the bureaucratic deformations of Marxist thought.

Sartre has personally intervened to speed up liberalization. At the World Peace Congress in Moscow in July, 1962, he made a speech calling for the "disarmament of culture" as the prerequisite of ideological coexistence. He took as the touchstone of cultural disarmament the attitude toward the long-tabooed works of Kafka. The following November, the Czech Union of Writers invited Sartre to Prague for lectures and a colloquium on Kafka, which was a big step toward the complete rehabilitation of the prophet of alienation in his own country. Kafka, the incisive portrayer of soulless bureaucratism, has become a prime symbol to the intellectuals in their struggle to end the profound alienations they and the people suffered under Stalin.

The desire to know more about Existentialism has spread to the Soviet Union, where the works of Sartre have benefited from the greater official tolerance of Western culture following the post-Stalin "thaw." The Existentialist Sorbonne professor Jean Hyppolite tells how, during a recent visit, the Soviet Academy of Sciences contrived to have him talk to the students about the machine instead of Existentialism, as he wished. However, all the questions after his lecture related to Existentialism. "It seems to me that the youth was strongly interested in Sartre's Existentialist philosophy," he wryly observed.

Thus in the Soviet bloc today a current of "Existentialized" Communism is running parallel with Sartre's neo-Marxist Existentialism, tending to converge toward it at some points.

A Conflict of Humanisms

Both Existentialism and Marxism subscribe to the primary proposition of humanism that the welfare of mankind on this earth and in this life should be our central concern. Both lay claim to be the legitimate heir of the finest humanist traditions and the truest contemporary expression of its ideas and aspirations.

However, they rest on different premises and arrive at different conclusions about the position and prospects of mankind. Humanism has customarily upheld reason, and science as the highest form of reason, as the most dependable guide to understanding and mastering the natural and social environment and directing human conduct. Marxism accepts this. Existentialism, on the other hand, is the first claimant to the title which distrusts the power of reason and disparages the work of science.

Whereas Marxian humanism is thoroughly materialist and collectivist, Existentialist humanism is essentially moralistic and individualistic. The past, present and future of mankind are not governed by the material conditions of social existence but by the free choice of moral values and the personal creation of spiritual ideals. Thus, in his essay *The Premises and Possibilities of a New Humanism,* Karl Jaspers concludes: "The moral power of the seemingly infinitesimal individual is the sole substance and the real instrumentality of humanity's future."

In their endeavors to invest life in a senseless world with meaning and worth, the atheistic Existentialists take off from the problem propounded by Nietzsche: how can and should man live in a universe without God? The discovery that God does not exist disturbs Existentialists as deeply and enduringly as Rank's birth-trauma is supposed to affect the infant psyche. Man is hurled into a harsh and unfriendly world with no one but himself to rely on.

Where is he to turn, what is he to do, what sureties can he find to replace the loss of divine support and guidance? Is human conduct to remain without a compass or goal, are there any limits to what we may or may not do once God, His commandments and the clerical interpreters of His message are rejected?

Nietzsche's solution was the superman, to whom everything necessary was permitted. He envisaged the revitalization of European culture vitiated by the slave religion of Christianity through a return to Greek humanism, combining Dionysian ecstasy with Apollonian measure. The Christian ethics as the code of servile masses was to be supplanted by the will to power of a new elite. This master class would revalue all values in line with its requirements and discard the despicable and degrading standards of Christianity, democracy and socialism.

Nietzsche's cult of the master race and his antipathy to democracy and socialism were, of course, completely unacceptable to the contemporary French Existentialists. They base their humanism on the very values he scorned.

Buffeted between a yearning for identification with the struggling and suffering masses and the intractable individualism of their philosophy, they have found it difficult to establish a firm theoretical footing for their humanist moralities. Sartre originally advocated a purely individualistic relativism without any standard or scale of values. "All human activities are equivalent. . . . Thus it is the same thing to get drunk or to lead peoples," he wrote in *Being and Nothingness*.

Several years later, in *Existentialism Is a Humanism,* he discarded this shaky and sweeping subjectivism and set forth the view that we must so act as to take the needs of all men into account. But he could not point to any objective criteria that would validate this universal rule.

Finally, Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir have found a more specific gauge of moral judgment in the aims of the struggle for socialism. However, they have not succeeded in eliminating arbitrariness from their ethics since they continue to make moral judgments and values exclusively dependent upon unfettered individual choice.

Albert Camus directed his humanism along similar lines. "We

need to know if man, without the help of religion or of rationalist thought, can create his own values entirely by himself," he wrote in 1944. He spent the rest of his life in quest of such values.

He turned against historical Christianity and contemporary materialism because they postponed the cure of evil and murder to an unattainable future. "In both cases one must wait, and meanwhile the innocent continue to die. For twenty centuries the sum total of evil has not diminished in the world," he cried out in *The Rebel.*

Nothing remains to men crushed between absurdity and oppression but the power to rebel. They must resist whatever thwarts, humiliates and denies their humanity. Since all men share the same condition and fate, their protests against terror and nihilism reveal the true qualities and solidarity of mankind. The slave who refuses to obey the order of his master acts "in the name of certain values . . . which he feels are common to himself and all men." Among these values are truth, justice, equality, liberty, love and respect for our fellows, the right to dissent.

Camus remained vague about what kind of political program and form of social organization can reduce the sum total of human suffering, lead men to greater freedom and achieve the ideals he cherished. He leaves to each person the responsibility for combatting tyranny in his own way so long as he does not attempt the impossible, destroy life in order to bring about a better life, and abridge real liberty in the name of emancipation.

The cardinal injunction of his morality was to speak out against every specific crime against humanity from capital punishment to poverty. The whole literary output of this gifted artist resounds with an unsatisfied plea for justice. He feels and shares the torments of our troubled times with a hope but no assurance that they can or will be overcome.

The passion and pathos of his personalized humanist credo is eloquently expressed in the following statement :

> I am not a philosopher, in fact I can only speak of what I have lived. I have lived nihilism, contradiction, violence, and the dizziness of destruction. But, at the same time, I have greeted the power to create and the honor of living. Nothing gives me the right to judge from above an epoch of which I

am completely a part. I judge it from within, confusing myself with it. But I hold to the right of saying, henceforth, what I know about myself and others, only on the condition that this may not add to the unbearable misery of the world, but rather will indicate, in the dark walls against which we grope, the yet invisible spaces where the gates may open. Yes, I hold to the right of saying what I know, and I shall say it. I am only interested in the renaissance.

Marx and Engels regarded themselves as humanists all their lives. As young Hegelian radicals and disciples of Feuerbach, they were militant humanists of the bourgeois-democratic variety, advocating ideas that, as those of Camus, envisaged the emancipation of humanity as a whole and loftily remained above class divisions and class interest. At this stage, Engels declared that Communism was "not an affair of the workers, but of the human species."

They profoundly transformed their earlier conceptions of humanism as they elaborated the materialist interpretation of history and their criticism of capitalism. Upon their complete identification with the revolutionary Communist movement of the working class, their humanism shed its abstractly universal and non-class features and became directly related to actual social conditions and struggles.

From then on, Marxist humanism has been inseparable from the view of historical development that the aim of abolishing the inhuman conditions of capitalist exploitation can be accomplished only through revolutionary action by the world working class. This central conclusion demarcates the Marxist from all other schools of humanism.

Socialist humanists do not, like the Existentialists, mourn the death of God as a tragic bereavement. They see cause for rejoicing, not regret, wherever this fiction is discarded and scientific enlightenment and progressive political struggle for a better life on earth take its place. The end of belief in supernatural forces is an immense gain, not a sad loss, for humanity.

Marxism is humanistic in the deepest sense, since it teaches that men have made and remade themselves as a result of the improvements in their capacities for producing wealth. Men, as producers of their own conditions of existence and development, have created their own history.

However, human history to date has not been produced in a conscious or planned manner. The results of men's activities have not coincided with their aims and desires but have all too often thwarted and nullified them. The Existentialists believe that this must always be so.

Marxism maintains that the fundamental cause of this perversity of history as well as the inhumanity of man to man "which makes countless millions mourn" has been the low level of labor productivity. The further mastery of the material world together with the expansion of modern powers of production will make possible the abolition of the most formidable constraints upon our freedom. Marx emphasized that men cannot behave according to truly human standards or bring forth their full potentialities unless and until they live under truly human conditions. Only when their lives have been fundamentally transformed by an unstinted outpouring of goods, only when they are relieved from compulsory labor and from the coercions of money and the state power, can men throw off the contradictory relations that have tormented them with separatism and conflict. Free time for all with the means to pursue their self-development will breed free men.

That is why a socialist humanism aims, first of all, to develop the economy to that point of abundance where all the forces that have pitted men against one another can be forever eradicated. Its perspectives are bound up with the advancement and triumph of the world socialist revolution and its thorough transformation of social relations, customs and values. The classless society of the future will be the first form of civilization in which the individual will feel at home with the universe that bore him, in fellowship with his partners on this planet, and at peace with his inner self.

Can Existentialism and Marxism Be Reconciled?

Are Existentialism and Marxism compatible? Are they adversaries or affinities? Can they be synthesized into a coherent unit?

Most interpreters and adherents of Existentialism, especially the theists among them, do not think the two are reconcilable.

They reject Marxism totally because it fails to recognize what, to them, is the most meaningful aspect of being, the sovereign subjectivity and dignity of the individual. They maintain that materialist theory debases men to mere objects while socialist practice stamps out personal freedom.

Orthodox Marxists no less firmly insist that the contending philosophies have far too many principled differences to be welded into one.

In between stand a variegated group who agree with Sartre that the two can be fused into a single alloy that will reinforce both. In the United States the noted psychoanalytical sociologist Erich Fromm is the most ardent champion of the thesis that Existentialism and Marxism are substantially identical. In *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961), which really presents Fromm's concept of Marx, he asserts that Marx's thinking is humanistic existentialism. The doctrines appear alike to him since both protest against the alienation of man in modern society and seek ways to overcome it. He writes:

> Marx's philosophy constitutes a spiritual existentialism in secular language and because of this spiritual quality is opposed to the materialistic practice and thinly disguised materialistic philosophy of our age. Marx's aim, socialism, based on his theory of man, is essentially prophetic messianism in the language of the nineteenth century.

This transmutation of the materialist Marx into a precursor and preacher of existentialism is typical of radical humanists of very different backgrounds and beliefs. Fromm is the chief American representative of this trend which locates the "true" Marx in the early, unfinished and unpublished *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, which mark transitional stages of his development instead of in the ripe conclusions of his maturest thoughts. They contend that Marx has been misrepresented as a crude dialectical materialist by his orthodox disciples from Engels to Lenin until their revelation that he really was an ethical existentialist.

Fromm's equation of dialectical materialism with Existentialism is as ill-founded as his astonishing statement that "Marx's atheism

is the most advanced form of rational mysticism." The atheistic Marx is no more a mystic than the Marx of scientific socialism is an existentialist.

Ever since socialism became a powerful movement and Marxism its dominant ideology, attempts have been made to disqualify the dialectical and materialist principles of its method in favor of a different theoretical basis. At various times and places Kantianism, ethical idealism, positivism, pragmatism, and even Thomism have been nominated as replacements. None of these proposed supplements and substitutes or their eclectic combinations have proved convincing or viable. The Marxist system has such an integrated structure from its philosophical and logical premises to its political economy and historical outlook that it cannot easily be chopped up and recombined with other theories.

Sartrean Existentialism is the latest and most popular candidate for the office of eking out the real or alleged deficiencies of Marxist thought. It is unlikely to be more successful than its predecessors.

The Existentialists aver that the individual's sincerest act and tragic responsibility is his necessity to choose between anguishing alternatives and take the consequences. Sartre shrinks from doing this in philosophy. The confrontation of Existentialism with dialectical materialism is a genuine case of "either-or." But Sartre wants to embrace Kierkegaard with his right hand and Marx with his left, without choosing between them.

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments," Shakespeare said. The trouble is that dialectical materialism and Existentialism are contrary-minded and oriented along diametrically different lines. They clash at almost every point on the major issues of philosophy, sociology, morality and politics, as I have tried to demonstrate in the last article of this collection. It is a bootless task to try to mate these opposites.

This has not deterred, nor will it, either radical-minded Existentialists or socialist eclectics from trying to coalesce the one with the other. The controversy between the philosophers of existence and the dialectical materialists, as well as those who mix the two, has steadily expanded its area over the last two decades. It is still in full swing and far from concluded.

The selections in this anthology include key writings by the

principal protagonists of the contending viewpoints that have been the hallmarks in the debate to date. The contributors come from Germany, France, Hungary, Poland, the Soviet Union, and the United States. They fall into three groups: nonreligious Existentialists; outstanding representatives of official Communist thought; and other participants in the worldwide discussion.

This is the first compilation in which these contemporary outlooks are presented in direct confrontation with each other. Those who want to know what their similarities and differences really are and how compatible the philosophies may be can consult its contents and then make up their own minds.

GEORGE NOVACK

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

The beginnings of the conflict between Existentialism and Marxism can be traced back to the eminent thinkers of the nineteenth century who prefigured or founded these philosophical outlooks. The forerunner of atheistic existentialism was Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844–1900), who became an intellectual rebel against the pious atmosphere in which he was reared.

He was the grandson of two Lutheran ministers and the son of another who died when he was five years old. Educated at Bonn and Leipzig, he taught for two years as professor of classical philology at Basel. After discontent and poor health caused a premature retirement from his professorial post in 1879, he wandered from place to place in Germany and Italy, writing prolifically though often in great pain. He became hopelessly insane in 1889 and did no further work in the last decade of his life.

He published 13 books during his lifetime, including one each year from 1878 to 1888. The most popular is *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (parts 1–3, 1883–84; part 4, 1891), in which he gave symbolic expression to his philosophic ideas.

Nietzsche composed *The Joyful Wisdom* in 1882, when he was most elated about the daring new thoughts welling up within him. Through "the madman" he proclaimed the destruction of faith in God. This discovery, which threatened to rob life of all meaning and plunge man into the void of nihilism, need not cause inconsolable tragedy. We should rather rejoice because God's death opens the prospect of emancipation from slavishness. Henceforth man is free to go forward and create a humanism based on the will to power of the autonomous personality.

These keynotes, sounded in the following excerpts from

The Joyful Wisdom, were to be fully orchestrated by the atheistic existentialists of the twentieth century.

THE MADMAN

Have you ever heard of the madman who on a bright morning lighted a lantern and ran to the market-place calling out unceasingly: "I seek God! I seek God!"—As there were many people standing about who did not believe in God, he caused a great deal of amusement. Why! is he lost? said one. Has he strayed away like a child? said another. Or does he keep himself hidden? Is he afraid of us? Has he taken a sea voyage? Has he emigrated?—the people cried out laughingly, all in a hubbub. The insane man jumped into their midst and transfixed them with his glances. "Where is God gone?" he called out. "I mean to tell you! *We have killed him*—you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it now move? Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker? Shall we not have to light lanterns in the morning? Do we not hear the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we not smell the divine putrefaction?—for even Gods putrefy! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How shall we console ourselves, the most murderous of all murderers? The holiest and the mightiest that the world has hitherto possessed, has bled to death under our knife—who will wipe the blood from us? With what water could we cleanse ourselves? What lustrums, what sacred games shall we have to devise? Is not the magnitude of this deed

too great for us? Shall we not ourselves have to become Gods, merely to seem worthy of it? There never was a greater event—and on account of it, all who are born after us belong to a higher history than any history hitherto!"—Here the madman was silent and looked again at his hearers; they also were silent and looked at him in surprise. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, so that it broke in pieces and was extinguished. "I come too early," he then said, "I am not yet at the right time. This prodigious event is still on its way, and is traveling—it has not yet reached men's ears. Lightning and thunder need time, the light of the stars needs time, deeds need time, even after they are done, to be seen and heard. This deed is as yet further from them than the furthest star —*and yet they have done it!*"—It is further stated that the madman made his way into different churches on the same day, and there intoned his *Requiem aeternam deo*. When led out and called to account, he always gave the reply: "What are these churches now, if they are not the tombs and monuments of God?"

WHAT OUR CHEERFULNESS SIGNIFIES

The most important of more recent events—that "God is dead," that the belief in the Christian God has become unworthy of belief —already begins to cast its first shadows over Europe. To the few at least whose eye, whose *suspecting* glance, is strong enough and subtle enough for this drama, some sun seems to have set, some old, profound confidence seems to have changed into doubt: our old world must seem to them daily more darksome, distrustful, strange and "old." In the main, however, one may say that the event itself is far too great, too remote, too much beyond most people's power of apprehension, for one to suppose that so much as the report of it could have *reached* them; not to speak of many who already knew *what* had taken place, and what must all collapse now that this belief had been undermined—because so much was

built upon it, so much rested on it, and had become one with it: for example, our entire European morality. This lengthy, vast and uninterrupted process of crumbling, destruction, ruin and overthrow which is now imminent: who has realized it sufficiently today to have to stand up as the teacher and herald of such a tremendous logic of terror, as the prophet of a period of gloom and eclipse, the like of which has probably never taken place on earth before? . . . Even we, the born riddle-readers, who wait as it were on the mountains posted 'twixt today and tomorrow, and engirt by their contradiction, we, the firstlings and premature children of the coming century, into whose sight especially the shadows which must forthwith envelop Europe *should* already have come—how is it that even we, without genuine sympathy for this period of gloom, contemplate its advent without any *personal* solicitude or fear? Are we still, perhaps, too much under the *immediate effects* of the event—and are these effects, especially as regards *ourselves,* perhaps the reverse of what was to be expected—not at all sad and depressing, but rather like a new and indescribable variety of light, happiness, relief, enlivenment, encouragement, and dawning day? . . . In fact, we philosophers and "free spirits" feel ourselves irradiated as by a new dawn by the report that the "old God is dead"; our hearts overflow with gratitude, astonishment, presentiment and expectation. At last the horizon seems open once more, granting even that it is not bright; our ships can at last put out to sea in face of every danger; every hazard is again permitted to the discerner; the sea, *our* sea, again lies open before us; perhaps never before did such an "open sea" exist.

KARL MARX *and* FRIEDRICH ENGELS

Karl Marx (1818–83) and Friedrich Engels (1820–95) were the cofounders of scientific socialism and the inspirers of modern communism. The most famous and influential of their writings on politics, economics and history are *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Capital* (Vol. I, 1867; Vols. II and III, posthumously edited by Engels, 1885–94).

The first selection is from their joint production, *The German Ideology*, which was drafted in 1846 but laid aside and only posthumously published. This first rough sketch of historical materialism contained many of the seminal ideas elaborated in their subsequent works.

Among these is their materialist approach to the problem of alienation. Marx and Engels traced the origin and persistence of this condition to the division of labor and the fierce struggle for the necessities of life under an inadequate development of the powers of production. They linked the disappearance of alienation with the abolition of private property and the unstinted abundance of goods promised by a Communist regulation of production. The socialist revolution would give "the control and conscious mastery of those powers which, born of the action of men on one another, have till now overawed and governed men as powers completely alien to them."

Later, in the section from *Capital* partly reprinted here, Marx more precisely explained the historical roots and mechanism of the process of alienation under capitalism by unveiling the mystery of the commodity form of the labor product. In contemporary society men are directly connected with one another by way of exchange. Through the

mediation of the commodities they buy and sell, the relations of people assume the outward guise, or disguise, of relations between things.

Misled by the appearances of social realities, men under the spell of commodity relations come to believe that such economic categories as money, price, capital, interest and profit belong to things in the same way as their weight and color. They mistake the expressions of the productive relations peculiar to the forms of exchange for objective properties of things. Just as the primitive endows a stone with supernatural powers that are projections of his imagination and ignorance, so civilized men make fetishes out of the material depositories of their social relations.

The fetishisms arising from the commodity form are ingrained in the mentality and outlook of people dominated by market concepts and money relations. It stands out, for example, in the common saying: "He's worth a million dollars," where a monetary token serves as the standard of value for a human being.

Similarly, a wage-worker is viewed by the capitalist not as a person requiring the satisfaction of diverse needs but solely as a means of profit-making.

Marx considered that men would not and could not cease regarding and treating one another as things until they had succeeded in reorganizing society on a diametrically different economic basis.

ALIENATION AND COMMUNISM

Further, the division of labor implies the contradiction between the interest of the separate individual or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another. And indeed, this communal interest does not exist merely in the imagination, as "the general good," but first of all in reality, as the mutual interdependence of the individuals among whom the

labor is divided. And finally, the division of labor offers us the first example of how, as long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is not voluntarily, but naturally, divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him. For as soon as labor is distributed, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.

This crystallization of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now. And out of this very contradiction between the interest of the individual and that of the community, the latter takes an independent form as the STATE, divorced from the real interests of individual and community, and at the same time as an illusory communal life, always based, however, on the real ties existing in every family and tribal conglomeration (such as flesh and blood, language, division of labor on a larger scale, and other interests) and especially, as we shall enlarge upon later, on the classes, already determined by the division of labor, which in every such mass of men separate out, and of which one dominates all the others. It follows from this that all struggles within the State, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc., etc., are merely the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another (of this the German theoreticians have not the faintest inkling, although they have received a sufficient introduc-

tion to the subject in *The German-French Annals* and *The Holy Family*).

Further, it follows that every class which is struggling for mastery, even when its domination, as is the case with the proletariat, postulates the abolition of the old form of society in its entirety and of mastery itself, must first conquer for itself political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest, a step to which in the first moment it is forced. Just because individuals seek *only* their particular interest, i.e., that not coinciding with their communal interest (for the "general good" is the illusory form of communal life), the latter will be imposed on them as an interest "alien" to them, and "independent" of them, as in its turn a particular, peculiar "general interest"; or they must meet face to face in this antagonism, as in democracy. On the other hand too, the *practical* struggle of these particular interests, which constantly *really* run counter to the communal and illusory communal interests, make *practical* intervention and control necessary through the illusory "general interest" in the form of the State. The social power, i.e., the multiplied productive force, which arises through the cooperation of different individuals as it is determined within the division of labor, appears to these individuals, since their cooperation is not voluntary but natural, not as their own united power but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and end of which they are ignorant, which they thus cannot control, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and the action of man, nay even being the prime governor of these.

This "estrangement" (to use a term which will be comprehensible to the philosophers) can, of course, only be abolished given two *practical* premises. For it to become an "intolerable" power, i.e., a power against which men make a revolution, it must necessarily have rendered the great mass of humanity "propertyless," and produced, at the same time, the contradiction of an existing world of wealth and culture, both of which conditions presuppose a great increase in productive power, a high degree of its development. And, on the other hand, this development of productive forces (which itself implies the actual empirical existence of men in their *world-historical,* instead of local, being) is absolutely

necessary as a practical premise: firstly, for the reason that without it only *want* is made general, and with want the struggle for necessities and all the old filthy business would necessarily be reproduced; and secondly, because only with this universal development of productive forces is a *universal* intercourse between men established, which produces in all nations simultaneously the phenomenon of the "propertyless" mass (universal competition), makes each nation dependent on the revolutions of the others, and finally has put *world-historical,* empirically universal individuals in place of local ones. Without this, (1) Communism could only exist as a local event; (2) the forces of intercourse themselves could not have developed as universal, hence intolerable powers: they would have remained home-bred superstitious conditions; and (3) each extension of intercourse would abolish local communism. Empirically, communism is only possible as the act of the dominant peoples "all at once" or simultaneously, which presupposes the universal development of productive forces and the world-intercourse bound up with them. How otherwise could property have had a history at all, have taken on different forms, and landed property, for instance, according to the different premises given, have proceeded in France from parcellation to centralization in the hands of a few, in England from centralization in the hands of a few to parcellation, as is actually the case today? Or how does it happen that trade, which after all is nothing more than the exchange of products of various individuals and countries, rules the whole world through the relation of supply and demand—a relation which, as an English economist says, hovers over the earth like the Fate of the Ancients, and with invisible hand allots fortune and misfortune to men, sets up empires and overthrows empires, causes nations to rise and to disappear—while with the abolition of the basis of private property, with the communistic regulation of production (and, implicit in this, the destruction of the alien relation between men and what they themselves produce), the power of the relation of supply and demand is dissolved into nothing, and men get exchange, production, the mode of their mutual relation, under their own control again?

Communism is for us not a stable state which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call

communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence. Besides, the world-market is presupposed by the mass of propertyless workers—labor-power cut off as a mass from capital or from even a limited satisfaction—and therefore no longer by the mere precariousness of labor, which, not giving an assured livelihood, is often lost through competition. The proletariat can thus only exist *world-historically,* just as communism, its movement, can only have a "world-historical" existence. World-historical existence of individuals, i.e., existence of individuals which is directly linked up with world history. . . .

THE MYSTERY OF THE FETISHISTIC CHARACTER OF COMMODITIES

At the first glance, a commodity seems a commonplace sort of thing, one easily understood. Analysis shows, however, that it is a very queer thing indeed, full of metaphysical subtleties and theological whimsies. Insofar as it is a use-value, there is nothing mysterious about it—whether we regard it as something whose natural properties enable it to satisfy human wants, or as something which only acquires such properties as the outcome of human labor. It is obvious that man, by his activity, modifies the forms of natural substances so as to make them useful to himself. For instance, the form of wood is altered when we make a table of it. Nonetheless, the table is still wood, an ordinary palpable thing. But as soon as it presents itself as a commodity, it is transformed into a thing which is transcendental as well as palpable. It stands with its feet solidly planted on the floor: but at the same time, over against all other commodities, it stands on its head; and in that wooden head it forms crotchets far stranger than table-turning ever was.

Thus the enigma of commodities does not arise out of their use-value. Nor does it depend upon the nature of the factors of value. For, in the first place, no matter how different the kinds of useful labor or productive activity may be, it is a physiological fact that they are all functions of the human organism, and that every such function (no matter what its content and its form may be) is essentially the expenditure of human brain, nerve, muscle, sense organ, etc. Secondly, as concerns that which underlies the determination of the magnitude of value, namely the duration of this expenditure, or the quantity of labor, our senses enable us to distinguish between the quantity and the quality of labor. Whatever the social conditions, men must have had an interest in the time requisite for the production of food, though the degree of that interest must have varied at various stages of social evolution. In fine, whenever human beings work for one another in any way, their labor acquires a social form.

Why, then, does the labor product become enigmatic as soon as it assumes the commodity form? The cause must obviously lie in the form itself. The essential likeness of the kinds of human labor is concreted in the form of the identical reality of value in the products of labor; the measurement of the expenditure of human labor power in terms of its duration, takes on the form of the magnitude of value of the labor product; and, finally, the mutual relations between the producers, in which the social character of their labor affirms itself, assume the form of a social relation between the labor products.

Thus the mystery of the commodity form is simply this, that it mirrors for men the social character of their own labor, mirrors it as an objective character attaching to the labor products themselves, mirrors it as a social natural property of these things. Consequently the social relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labor, presents itself to them as a social relation, not between themselves, but between the products of their labor. Thanks to this transference of qualities, the labor products become commodities, transcendental or social things which are at the same time perceptible by our senses. In like manner, the impression which the light reflected from an object makes upon the retina is perceived, not as a subjective stimulation of that organ, but in the

form of a concrete object existing outside the eye. But in vision, light actually passes from one thing, the external object, to another thing, the eye. We are dealing with a physical relation between physical actualities. On the other hand, the commodity form, and the value relation between the labor products which finds expression in the commodity form, have nothing whatever to do with the physical properties of the commodities or with the material relations that arise out of these physical properties. We are concerned only with a definite social relation between human beings, which, in their eyes, has here assumed the semblance of a relation between things. To find an analogy, we must enter the nebulous world of religion. In that world, the products of the human mind become independent shapes, endowed with lives of their own, and able to enter into relations with men and women. The products of the human hand do the same thing in the world of commodities. I speak of this as the *fetishistic character* which attaches to the products of labor, so soon as they are produced in the form of commodities. It is inseparable from commodity production. . . .

Man's thought about the forms of social life, his scientific analysis of these forms, runs counter to the actual course of social evolution. He begins by an examination of the finished product, the extant result of the evolutionary process. The characters which stamp labor products as commodities, the characters which they must possess before they can circulate as commodities, have already acquired the fixity of the natural forms of social life, when economists begin to study, not indeed their history (for they are regarded as immutable), but their meaning. Thus it was only the analysis of the prices of commodities which led to the determination of the magnitude of values, it was only the common expression of all commodities in money which led to their being recognized as "values." But this finished form of the world of commodities, this money form, is the very thing which veils instead of disclosing the social character of private or individual labor, and therewith hides the social relations between the individual producers. When I say that coats or boots or what not are related to linen as the general embodiment of abstract human labor, the statement seems manifestly absurd. Yet when the producers of coats, boots, etc., bring these commodities into relation with linen as the general equivalent (or with gold or silver as the general equivalent, for the nature

of the case is just the same), it is precisely in this absurd form that the relation between their own private labor and the collective labor of society discloses itself to them.

These forms are the very things that comprise the categories of bourgeois economics. They are the socially valid, and therefore objective, thought-forms, which serve to express the relations of production peculiar to one specific method of social production, namely commodity production. Consequently, all the mystery of the world of commodities, all the sorcery, all the fetishistic charm, which enwraps as with a fog the labor products of a system of commodity production, is instantly dispelled when we turn to consider other methods of production.

Political economists are fond of Robinson Crusoe, so we, too, will take a look at this lonely islander. His wants are few and simple, but he has some wants at least, and must therefore undertake various kinds of useful labor. He must fashion tools, make furniture, tame llamas, fish, hunt, etc. I am not here concerned with his praying and the like, for Robinson Crusoe delights in these kinds of activity, and looks upon them as recreation. Despite the variety of his productive functions, he knows that they are but various forms of the activity of one and the same Robinson Crusoe, and are therefore nothing but different manifestations of human labor. Under stress of need, he has to allot his time suitably to this, that, and the other function. In the sum of his activities, the assignment of more space to one and less to another is determined by the greater or the less extent of the difficulties that have to be overcome in attaining the useful end he has in view. In this matter, experience is his teacher, and our Robinson (having saved timepiece, ledger, pen, and ink from the wreck) soon begins, as becomes an Englishman, bookkeeping in due form with himself as subject of the entries. He writes an inventory of the useful objects he owns; specifies the routine work necessary for their production; and records the labor time which, on the average, definite quantities of the respective products cost him. The relations between Robinson and the things which comprise the wealth he has created are so simple that even Herr M. Wirth could understand them without undue mental effort. Nevertheless, all the essential determinants of value are therein contained.

Let us now transport ourselves from Crusoe's sunlit isle to the

darkness of medieval Europe. In the island, we have one independent person, the only inhabitant. In Europe during the Middle Ages, all are dependent: serfs and barons, vassals and suzerains, laymen and priests. Dependence characterizes the social relations of material production, no less than the spheres of life that are established upon these relations. But for the very reason that relations of personal dependence form the groundwork of society, it is not necessary that labor and the products of labor should assume fantastic shapes differing from their real ones. They enter into the social mechanism as services in kind and payments in kind. The natural form of labor, its particular form, is here the immediate social form of labor—in contradistinction to what happens in a society organized upon the basis of commodity production, where abstract labor, its generalized form, is the immediate social form of labor. Forced labor (*corvée*) can be measured by time, just as easily as commodity-producing labor; but every serf knows that what he is expending in the service of his lord is a definite quantity of his own labor power. The tithe which must be handed over to the priest is a more tangible reality than his reverence's blessing. Whatever view we take of the masks in which the different personalities strut upon the feudal stage, at any rate the social relations between individuals at work appear in their natural guise as personal relations, and are not dressed up as social relations between things, between the products of labor.

If we wish to study labor in common, or directly associated labor, we need not go back to the spontaneously developed form which confronts us on the threshold of the history of all civilized races. An example nearer to our hand is offered by the patriarchal industry of a peasant family working on the land, and producing for its own requirements grain, cattle, yarn, linen, clothing, and the like. For the family, these various articles are diverse products of the family labor, but they are not interchangeable as commodities. The different kinds of labor which generate these products (tillage, cattle breeding, spinning, weaving, tailoring, etc.) are in their natural form social functions, inasmuch as they are functions of the family, which has its own spontaneously developed system of the division of labor—just as commodity production has such a system. The division of labor among the various members of the family, and the apportionment of their respective labor times, are

determined by differences of sex and age and by seasonal changes in natural working conditions. The expenditure of each individual's labor power, as measured by the duration of the labor, assumes from the outset the aspect of a social determination of labor, since from the outset the individual exertions of labor power function merely as instruments of the joint labor power of the family.

Finally, for a change, let us consider an association of free individuals who work with jointly owned means of production, and wittingly expend their several labor powers as a combined social labor power. In this case, all the characteristics of Robinson Crusoe's labor are reproduced, except that the labor is social, instead of being individual. Robinson Crusoe's products were exclusively individual, and were therefore useful objects for himself alone. The total product of our imaginary association is a social product. Part of this product is used as a means for further production, and therefore remains social. Another part is consumed as subsistence by the various members of the association, and has therefore to be distributed among them. The way in which this distribution is effected will vary in accordance with variations in the nature of the social organism which carries on the work of production, and in accordance with the corresponding level of historical evolution attained by the producers. Let us assume (merely for the sake of a comparison with commodity production) that each producer's share of the necessaries of life is determined by the amount of time he has worked. In that case, the labor time will play a double role. On the one hand, its allotment in accordance with a definite social plan enables the various kinds of labor to be duly proportioned to the various social needs. On the other hand, the labor time serves as standard of measurement, first as regards the share of each individual producer in the joint labor, and secondly (because of the foregoing) as regards the amount of the social product which each individual is entitled to consume. The social relations between human beings, on one side, and their labor and the products thereof, on the other, remain perfectly simple and perfectly clear, alike in production and in distribution.

Suppose a society made up of the producers of commodities, where the general relations of social production are such that (since products are commodities, i.e. values) the individual labors of the various producers are related one to another in the concrete

commodity form as embodiments of undifferentiated human labor. For a society of this type, Christianity, with its cult of the abstract human being, is the most suitable religion—above all, Christianity in its bourgeois phases of development, such as Protestantism, Deism, and the like. But in the ancient Asiatic method of production, in that of classical Greece and Rome, and so on, the transformation of the labor product into a commodity, and therefore the transformation of men into the producers of commodities, played a subordinate part—which, however, became a more important one in proportion as this type of society was passing into its decline. Like the gods of Epicurus, or like the Jews in the interstices of Polish society, genuinely commercial peoples existed only in the intermundane spaces of the antique world. The social productive organisms of ancient days were far simpler, enormously more easy to understand, than is bourgeois society; but they were based, either upon the immaturity of the individual human being (who had not yet severed the umbilical cord which, under primitive conditions, unites all the members of the human species one with another), or upon direct relations of dominion and subjugation. They were the outcome of a low grade of the evolution of the productive powers of labor; a grade in which the relations of human beings to one another within the process by which they produced the material necessaries of life, and therefore their relations to nature as well, were correspondingly immature. This restrictedness in the world of concrete fact was reflected in the ideal world, in the world of the old natural and folk religions. Such religious reflexions of the real world will not disappear until the relations between human beings in their practical everyday life have assumed the aspect of perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations as between man and man, and as between man and nature. The life process of society, this meaning the material process of production, will not lose its veil of mystery until it becomes a process carried on by a free association of producers, under their conscious and purposive control. For this, however, an indispensable requisite is that there should exist a specific material groundwork (or a series of material conditions of existence) which can only come into being as the spontaneous outcome of a long and painful process of evolution. . . .

II

THE OPENING OF THE DEBATE

II

THE DEBATE

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905——) was born in Paris and graduated from France's most select school of learning, the École Normale Supérieure, in 1929 with a doctorate in philosophy. From 1928 to 1944 he taught philosophy in LeHavre, Laon and Paris.

He first won literary acclaim with his novel, *Nausea,* in 1938. His most ambitious work of fiction is the unfinished tetralogy, *The Roads to Freedom* (1945–49). His best-known plays are *The Flies* (1942), produced in challenge to the German occupation, *No Exit* (1944), *Red Gloves* (1948) and *The Condemned of Altona* (1960).

Being and Nothingness (1943) and *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960) are his chief philosophical treatises. The first volume of his autobiography, *The Words,* an account of his early years published in 1964, has been a sensational best-seller in France and the United States. Sartre won the 1964 Nobel Prize for Literature but spurned the award on the grounds that he did not wish to be beholden to any institution or become embroiled in East-West cultural conflicts.

In the post-Liberation period, Sartre took the offensive against dialectical materialism in the two pieces from which the following excerpts have been taken. The first, *Existentialism Is a Humanism,* was originally delivered as a lecture in Paris in October, 1945, when the new philosophy had moved to the center of attention in vanguard intellectual circles and had even become a popular fad. Through this simplified exposition, Sartre hoped to dispel misunderstandings about his views and answer the charges leveled against them by Communist and Catholic critics. In the discussion following the speech, Pierre Naville, a well-known independent French Marxist, accused Sartre of attempting to "revive the es-

sential nature of reformism" and of representing a "humanistic liberalism that is in torture and agony."

Sartre subjected the philosophical foundations of Marxism to severe examination in the second essay, *Materialism and Revolution,* published in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1946. The first part, reprinted in full here, sought to expose the scientific pretensions of Marxism as unwarranted. In opposition to Marxism, Sartre contended that matter is inert, purely quantitative, and only externally related. Unlike society, Nature has no history, contains no reciprocally causal connections and does not undergo any progressive or dialectical development, especially no transmutations of quantity into quality. In the second section, on *The Philosophy of Revolution,* Sartre warned that materialism would stifle the revolutionary impulse to death.

EXISTENTIALISM IS A HUMANISM

I should like on this occasion to defend existentialism against some charges which have been brought against it.

First, it has been charged with inviting people to remain in a kind of desperate quietism because, since no solutions are possible, we should have to consider action in this world as quite impossible. We should then end up in a philosophy of contemplation; and since contemplation is a luxury, we come in the end to a bourgeois philosophy. The Communists in particular have made these charges.

On the other hand, we have been charged with dwelling on human degradation, with pointing up everywhere the sordid, shady, and slimy, and neglecting the gracious and beautiful, the bright side of human nature; for example, according to Mlle. Mercier, a Catholic critic, with forgetting the smile of the child. Both sides charge us with having ignored human solidarity, with considering man as an isolated being. The Communists say that the main rea-

son for this is that we take pure subjectivity, the *Cartesian I think,* as our starting point; in other words, the moment in which man becomes fully aware of what it means to him to be an isolated being; as a result, we are unable to return to a state of solidarity with the men who are not ourselves, a state which we can never reach in the *cogito.*

From the Christian standpoint, we are charged with denying the reality and seriousness of human undertakings, since, if we reject God's commandments and the eternal verities, there no longer remains anything but pure caprice, with everyone permitted to do as he pleases and incapable, from his own point of view, of condemning the points of view and acts of others.

I shall try today to answer these different charges. Many people are going to be surprised at what is said here about humanism. We shall try to see in what sense it is to be understood. In any case, what can be said from the very beginning is that by Existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity.

As is generally known, the basic charge against us is that we put the emphasis on the dark side of human life. Someone recently told me of a lady who, when she let slip a vulgar word in a moment of irritation, excused herself by saying, "I guess I'm becoming an Existentialist." Consequently, Existentialism is regarded as something ugly; that is why we are said to be naturalists; and if we are, it is rather surprising that in this day and age we cause so much more alarm and scandal than does naturalism, properly so called. The kind of person who can take in his stride such a novel as Zola's *The Earth* is disgusted as soon as he starts reading an Existentialist novel; the kind of person who is resigned to the wisdom of the ages—which is pretty sad—finds us even sadder. Yet, what can be more disillusioning than saying "true charity begins at home" or "a scoundrel will always return evil for good?"

We know the commonplace remarks made when this subject comes up, remarks which always add up to the same thing: we shouldn't struggle against the powers that be; we shouldn't resist authority; we shouldn't try to rise above our station; any action which doesn't conform to authority is romantic; any effort not

based on past experience is doomed to failure; experience shows that man's bent is always toward trouble, that there must be a strong hand to hold him in check, if not, there will be anarchy. There are still people who go on mumbling these melancholy old saws, the people who say, "It's only human!" whenever a more or less repugnant act is pointed out to them, the people who glut themselves on *chansons réalistes;* these are the people who accuse Existentialism of being too gloomy, and to such an extent that I wonder whether they are complaining about it, not for its pessimism, but much rather its optimism. Can it be that what really scares them in the doctrine I shall try to present here is that it leaves to man a possibility of choice? To answer this question, we must reexamine it on a strictly philosophical plane. What is meant by the term *Existentialism*?

Most people who use the word would be rather embarrassed if they had to explain it, since, now that the word is all the rage, even the work of a musician or painter is being called "existentialist." A gossip columnist in *Clartés* signs himself *The Existentialist,* so that by this time the word has been so stretched and has taken on so broad a meaning, that it no longer means anything at all. It seems that for want of an advance-guard doctrine analogous to surrealism, the kind of people who are eager for scandal and flurry turn to this philosophy, which in other respects does not at all serve their purposes in this sphere.

Actually, it is the least scandalous, the most austere of doctrines. It is intended strictly for specialists and philosophers. Yet it can be defined easily. What complicates matters is that there are two kinds of Existentialist; first, those who are Christian, among whom I would include Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both Catholic; and on the other hand the atheistic Existentialists, among whom I class Heidegger, and then the French Existentialists and myself. What they have in common is that they think that existence precedes essence, or, if you prefer, that subjectivity must be the starting point.

Just what does that mean? Let us consider some object that is manufactured, for example, a book or a paper cutter: here is an object which has been made by an artisan whose inspiration came from a concept. He referred to the concept of what a paper cutter

is and likewise to a known method of production, which is part of the concept, something which is, by and large, a routine. Thus, the paper cutter is at once an object produced in a certain way and, on the other hand, one having a specific use; and one cannot postulate a man who produces a paper cutter but does not know what it is used for. Therefore, let us say that, for the paper cutter, essence—that is, the ensemble of both the production routines and the properties which enable it to be both produced and defined—precedes existence. Thus, the presence of the paper cutter or book in front of me is determined. Therefore, we have here a technical view of the world whereby it can be said that production precedes existence.

When we conceive God as the Creator, He is generally thought of as a superior sort of artisan. Whatever doctrine we may be considering, whether one like that of Descartes or that of Leibnitz, we always grant that will more or less follows understanding or, at the very least, accompanies it, and that when God creates He knows exactly what He is creating. Thus, the concept of man in the mind of God is comparable to the concept of paper cutter in the mind of the manufacturer, and, following certain techniques and a conception, God produces man, just as the artisan, following a definition and a technique, makes a paper cutter. Thus, the individual man is the realization of a certain concept in the divine intelligence.

In the eighteenth century, the atheism of the *philosophes* discarded the idea of God, but not so much for the notion that essence precedes existence. To a certain extent, this idea is found everywhere; we find it in Diderot, in Voltaire, and even in Kant. Man has a human nature; this human nature, which is the concept of the human, is found in all men, which means that each man is a particular example of a universal concept, man. In Kant, the result of this universality is that the wild man, the natural man, as well as the bourgeois, are circumscribed by the same definition and have the same basic qualities. Thus, here too the essence of man precedes the historical existence that we find in nature.

Atheistic Existentialism, which I represent, is more coherent. It states that if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he

can be defined by any concept, and that this being is man, or, as Heidegger says, human reality. What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the Existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence.

Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the first principle of Existentialism. It is also what is called "subjectivity," the name we are labeled with when charges are brought against us. But what do we mean by this, if not that man has a greater dignity than a stone or table? For we mean that man first exists, that is, that man first of all is the being who hurls himself toward a future and who is conscious of imagining himself as being in the future. Man is at the start a plan which is aware of itself, rather than a patch of moss, a piece of garbage, or a cauliflower; nothing exists prior to this plan; there is nothing in heaven; man will be what he will have planned to be. Not what he will want to be. Because by the word "will" we generally mean a conscious decision, which is subsequent to what we have already made of ourselves. I may want to belong to a political party, write a book, get married; but all that is only a manifestation of an earlier, more spontaneous choice that is called "will." But if existence really does precede essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, Existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him. And when we say that a man is responsible for himself, we do not only mean that he is responsible for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men.

The word "subjectivism" has two meanings, and our opponents play on the two. Subjectivism means, on the one hand, that an individual chooses and makes himself; and, on the other, that it is impossible for man to transcend human subjectivity. The second of these is the essential meaning of Existentialism. When we say that man chooses his own self, we mean that every one of us does

likewise; but we also mean by that that in making this choice he also chooses all men. In fact, in creating the man that we want to be, there is not a single one of our acts which does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to be. To choose to be this or that is to affirm at the same time the value of what we choose, because we can never choose evil. We always choose the good, and nothing can be good for us without being good for all.

If, on the other hand, existence precedes essence, and if we grant that we exist and fashion our image at one and the same time, the image is valid for everybody and for our whole age. Thus, our responsibility is much greater than we might have supposed, because it involves all mankind. If I am a workingman and choose to join a Christian trade union rather than be a Communist, and if by being a member I want to show that the best thing for man is resignation, that the kingdom of man is not of this world, I am not only involving my own case—I want to be resigned for everyone. As a result, my action has involved all humanity. To take a more individual matter, if I want to marry, to have children, even if this marriage depends solely on my own circumstances or passion or wish, I am involving all humanity in monogamy and not merely myself. Therefore, I am responsible for myself and for everyone else. I am creating a certain image of man of my own choosing. In choosing myself, I choose man.

This helps us understand what the actual content is of such rather grandiloquent words as anguish, forlornness, despair. As you will see, it's all quite simple.

First, what is meant by "anguish"? The Existentialists say at once that man is anguish. What that means is this: the man who involves himself and who realizes that he is not only the person he chooses to be, but also a lawmaker who is, at the same time, choosing all mankind as well as himself, cannot escape the feeling of his total and deep responsibility. Of course, there are many people who are not anxious; but we claim that they are hiding their anxiety, that they are fleeing from it. Certainly, many people believe that when they do something, they themselves are the only ones involved, and when someone says to them, "What if everyone acted that way?" they shrug their shoulders and answer, "Every-

one doesn't act that way." But really, one should always ask himself, "What would happen if everybody looked at things that way?" There is no escaping this disturbing thought except by a kind of double-dealing. A man who lies and makes excuses for himself by saying "not everybody does that," is someone with an uneasy conscience, because the act of lying implies that a universal value is conferred upon the lie.

Anguish is evident even when it conceals itself. This is the anguish that Kierkegaard called the "anguish of Abraham." You know the story: an angel has ordered Abraham to sacrifice his son; if it really were an angel who has come and said, "You are Abraham, you shall sacrifice your son," everything would be all right. But everyone might first wonder, "Is it really an angel, and am I really Abraham? What proof do I have?"

There was a madwoman who had hallucinations; someone used to speak to her on the telephone and give her orders. Her doctor asked her, "Who is it who talks to you?" She answered, "He says it's God." What proof did she really have that it was God? If an angel comes to me, what proof is there that it's an angel? And if I hear voices, what proof is there that they come from heaven and not from hell, or from the subconscious, or a pathological condition? What proves that they are addressed to me? What proof is there that I have been appointed to impose my choice and my conception of man on humanity? I'll never find any proof or sign to convince me of that. If a voice addresses me, it is always for me to decide that this is the angel's voice; if I consider that such an act is a good one, it is I who will choose to say that it is good rather than bad.

Now, I'm not being singled out as an Abraham, and yet at every moment I'm obliged to perform exemplary acts. For every man, everything happens as if all mankind had its eyes fixed on him and were guiding itself by what he does. And every man ought to say to himself, "Am I really the kind of man who has the right to act in such a way that humanity might guide itself by my actions?" And if he does not say that to himself, he is masking his anguish.

There is no question here of the kind of anguish which would lead to quietism, to inaction. It is a matter of a simple sort of

anguish that anybody who has had responsibilities is familiar with. For example, when a military officer takes the responsibility for an attack and sends a certain number of men to death, he chooses to do so, and in the main he alone makes the choice. Doubtless, orders come from above, but they are too broad; he interprets them, and on this interpretation depend the lives of ten or fourteen or twenty men. In making a decision he cannot help having a certain anguish. All leaders know this anguish. That doesn't keep them from acting; on the contrary, it is the very condition of their action. For it implies that they envisage a number of possibilities, and when they choose one, they realize that it has value only because it is chosen. We shall see that this kind of anguish, which is the kind that Existentialism describes, is explained, in addition, by a direct responsibility to the other men whom it involves. It is not a curtain separating us from action, but is part of action itself.

When we speak of "forlornness," a term Heidegger was fond of, we mean only that God does not exist and that we have to face all the consequences of this. The Existentialist is strongly opposed to a certain kind of secular ethics which would like to abolish God with the least possible expense. About 1880, some French teachers tried to set up a secular ethics which went something like this: God is a useless and costly hypothesis; we are discarding it; but, meanwhile, in order for there to be an ethics, a society, a civilization, it is essential that certain values be taken seriously and that they be considered as having an *a priori* existence. It must be obligatory, *a priori,* to be honest, not to lie, not to beat your wife, to have children, etc., etc. So we're going to try a little device which will make it possible to show that values exist all the same, inscribed in a heaven of ideas, though otherwise God does not exist. In other words—and this, I believe, is the tendency of everything called "reformism" in France—nothing will be changed if God does not exist. We shall find ourselves with the same norms of honesty, progress, and humanism, and we shall have made of God an outdated hypothesis which will peacefully die off by itself.

The Existentialist, on the contrary, thinks it very distressing that God does not exist, because all possibility of finding values

in a heaven of ideas disappears along with Him; there can no longer be an *a priori* Good, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it. Nowhere is it written that the Good exists, that we must be honest, that we must not lie; because the fact is we are on a plane where there are only men. Dostoyevsky said, "If God didn't exist, everything would be possible." That is the very starting point of Existentialism. Indeed, everything is permissible if God does not exist, and as a result man is forlorn, because neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to. He can't start making excuses for himself.

If existence really does precede essence, there is no explaining things away by reference to a fixed and given human nature. In other words, there is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom. On the other hand, if God does not exist, we find no values or commands to turn to which legitimize our conduct. So, in the bright realm of values, we have no excuse behind us, nor justification before us. We are alone, with no excuses.

That is the idea I shall try to convey when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet, in other respects is free; because, once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. The Existentialist does not believe in the power of passion. He will never agree that a sweeping passion is a ravaging torrent which fatally leads a man to certain acts and is therefore an excuse. He thinks that man is responsible for his passion.

The Existentialist does not think that man is going to help himself by finding in the world some omen by which to orient himself. Because he thinks that man will interpret the omen to suit himself. Therefore, he thinks that man, with no support and no aid, is condemned every moment to invent man. Ponge, in a very fine article, has said, "Man is the future of man." That's exactly it. But if it is taken to mean that this future is recorded in heaven, that God sees it, then it is false, because it would really no longer be a future. If it is taken to mean that, whatever a man may be, there is a future to be forged, a virgin future before him, then this remark is sound. But then we are forlorn.

To give you an example which will enable you to understand forlornness better, I shall cite the case of one of my students who

came to see me under the following circumstances: his father was on bad terms with his mother, and, moreover, was inclined to be a collaborationist; his older brother had been killed in the German offensive of 1940, and the young man, with somewhat immature but generous feelings, wanted to avenge him. His mother lived alone with him, very much upset by the half-treason of her husband and the death of her older son; the boy was her only consolation.

The boy was faced with the choice of leaving for England and joining the Free French Forces—that is, leaving his mother behind—or remaining with his mother and helping her to carry on. He was fully aware that the woman lived only for him and that his going off—and perhaps his death—would plunge her into despair. He was also aware that every act that he did for his mother's sake was a sure thing, in the sense that it was helping her to carry on, whereas every effort he made toward going off and fighting was an uncertain move which might run aground and prove completely useless; for example, on his way to England he might, while passing through Spain, be detained indefinitely in a Spanish camp; he might reach England or Algiers and be stuck in an office at a desk job. As a result, he was faced with two very different kinds of action: one, concrete, immediate, but concerning only one individual; the other concerned an incomparably vaster group, a national collectivity, but for that very reason was dubious, and might be interrupted en route. And, at the same time, he was wavering between two kinds of ethics. On the one hand, an ethics of sympathy, of personal devotion; on the other, a broader ethics, but one whose efficacy was more dubious. He had to choose between the two.

Who could help him choose? Christian doctrine? No. Christian doctrine says, "Be charitable, love your neighbor, take the more rugged path, etc., etc." But which is the more rugged path? Whom should he love as a brother? The fighting man or his mother? Which does the greater good, the vague act of fighting in a group, or the concrete one of helping a particular human being to go on living? Who can decide *a priori?* Nobody. No book of ethics can tell him. The Kantian ethics says, "Never treat any person as a means, but as an end." Very well, if I stay with my mother, I'll

treat her as an end and not as a means; but by virtue of this very fact, I'm running the risk of treating the people around me who are fighting, as means; and, conversely, if I go to join those who are fighting, I'll be treating them as an end, and, by doing that, I run the risk of treating my mother as a means.

If values are vague, and if they are always too broad for the concrete and specific case that we are considering, the only thing left for us is to trust our instincts. That's what this young man tried to do; and when I saw him, he said, "In the end, feeling is what counts. I ought to choose whichever pushes me in one direction. If I feel that I love my mother enough to sacrifice everything else for her—my desire for vengeance, for action, for adventure—then I'll stay with her. If, on the contrary, I feel that my love for my mother isn't enough, I'll leave."

But how is the value of a feeling determined? What gives his feeling for his mother value? Precisely the fact that he remained with her. I may say that I like so-and-so well enough to sacrifice a certain amount of money for him, but I may say so only if I've done it. I may say, "I love my mother well enough to remain with her" if I have remained with her. The only way to determine the value of this affection is, precisely, to perform an act which confirms and defines it. But, since I require this affection to justify my act, I find myself caught in a vicious circle.

On the other hand, Gide has well said that a mock feeling and a true feeling are almost indistinguishable; to decide that I love my mother and will remain with her, or to remain with her by putting on an act, amount somewhat to the same thing. In other words, the feeling is formed by the acts one performs; so, I cannot refer to it in order to act upon it. Which means that I can neither seek within myself the true condition which will impel me to act, nor apply to a system of ethics for concepts which will permit me to act. You will say, "At least, he did go to a teacher for advice." But if you seek advice from a priest, for example, you have chosen this priest; you already knew, more or less, just about what advice he was going to give you. In other words, choosing your adviser is involving yourself. The proof of this is that if you are a Christian, you will say, "Consult a priest." But some priests are collaborating, some are just marking time, some are resisting. Which to choose?

If the young man chooses a priest who is resisting or collaborating, he has already decided on the kind of advice he's going to get. Therefore, in coming to see me he knew the answer I was going to give him, and I had only one answer to give: "You're free, choose, that is, invent." No general ethics can show you what is to be done; there are no omens in the world. The Catholics will reply, "But there are." Granted—but, in any case, I myself choose the meaning they have.

When I was a prisoner, I knew a rather remarkable young man who was a Jesuit. He had entered the Jesuit order in the following way: he had had a number of very bad breaks; in childhood, his father died, leaving him in poverty, and he was a scholarship student at a religious institution where he was constantly made to feel that he was being kept out of charity; then, he failed to get any of the honors and distinctions that children like; later on, at about eighteen, he bungled a love affair; finally, at twenty-two, he failed in military training, a childish enough matter, but it was the last straw.

This young fellow might well have felt that he had botched everything. It was a sign of something, but of what? He might have taken refuge in bitterness or despair. But he very wisely looked upon all this as a sign that he was not made for secular triumphs, and that only the triumphs of religion, holiness, and faith were open to him. He saw the hand of God in all this, and so he entered the order. Who can help seeing that he alone decided what the sign meant?

Some other interpretation might have been drawn from this series of setbacks; for example, that he might have done better to turn carpenter or revolutionist. Therefore, he is fully responsible for the interpretation. Forlornness implies that we ourselves choose our being. Forlornness and anguish go together.

As for "despair," the term has a very simple meaning. It means that we shall confine ourselves to reckoning only with what depends upon our will, or on the ensemble of probabilities which make our action possible. When we want something, we always have to reckon with probabilities. I may be counting on the arrival of a friend. The friend is coming by rail or streetcar; this supposes that the train will arrive on schedule, or that the streetcar

will not jump the track. I am left in the realm of possibility; but possibilities are to be reckoned with only to the point where my action comports with the ensemble of these possibilities, and no further. The moment the possibilities I am considering are not rigorously involved by my action, I ought to disengage myself from them, because no God, no scheme, can adapt the world and its possibilities to my will. When Descartes said, "Conquer yourself rather than the world," he meant essentially the same thing.

The Marxists to whom I have spoken reply, "You can rely on the support of others in your action, which obviously has certain limits, because you're not going to live forever. That means: rely on both what others are doing elsewhere to help you, in China, in Russia, and what they will do later on, after your death, to carry on the action and lead it to its fulfillment, which will be the revolution. You even *have* to rely upon that, otherwise you're immortal." I reply at once that I will always rely on fellow fighters insofar as these comrades are involved with me in a common struggle, in the unity of a party or a group in which I can more or less make my weight felt; that is, one whose ranks I am in as a fighter and whose movements I am aware of at every moment. In such a situation, relying on the unity and will of the party is exactly like counting on the fact that the train will arrive on time or that the car won't jump the track. But, given that man is free and that there is no human nature for me to depend on, I cannot count on men whom I do not know by relying on human goodness or man's concern for the good of society. I don't know what will become of the Russian revolution; I may make an example of it to the extent that at the present time it is apparent that the proletariat plays a part in Russia that it plays in no other nation. But I can't swear that this will inevitably lead to a triumph of the proletariat. I've got to limit myself to what I see.

Given that men are free and that tomorrow they will freely decide what man will be, I cannot be sure that, after my death, fellow fighters will carry on my work to bring it to its maximum perfection. Tomorrow, after my death, some men may decide to set up fascism, and the others may be cowardly and muddled enough to let them do it. Fascism will then be the human reality, so much the worse for us.

Actually, things will be as man will have decided they are to be. Does that mean that I should abandon myself to quietism? No. First, I should involve myself; then, act on the old saw, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." Nor does it mean that I shouldn't belong to a party, but rather that I shall have no illusions and shall do what I can. For example, suppose I ask myself, "Will socialization, as such, ever come about?" I know nothing about it. All I know is that I'm going to do everything in my power to bring it about. Beyond that, I can't count on anything. Quietism is the attitude of people who say, "Let others do what I can't do." The doctrine I am presenting is the very opposite of quietism, since it declares, "There is no reality except in action." Moreover, it goes further, since it adds, "Man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfills himself; he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life." . .

I've been reproached for asking whether Existentialism is humanistic. It's been said, "But you said in *Nausea* that the humanists were all wrong. You made fun of a certain kind of humanist. Why come back to it now?" Actually, the word "humanism" has two very different meanings. By "humanism" one can mean a theory which takes man as an end and as a higher value. Humanism in this sense can be found in Cocteau's tale *Around the World in Eighty Hours,* when a character, because he is flying over some mountains in an airplane, declares, "Man is simply amazing." That means that I, who did not build the airplanes, shall personally benefit from these particular inventions, and that I, as man, shall personally consider myself responsible for, and honored by, acts of a few particular men. This would imply that we ascribe a value to man on the basis of the highest deeds of certain men. This humanism is absurd, because only the dog or the horse would be able to make such an overall judgment about man, which they are careful not to do, at least to my knowledge.

But it cannot be granted that a man may make a judgment about man. Existentialism spares him from any such judgment. The Existentialist will never consider man as an end because he is always in the making. Nor should we believe that there is a mankind to which we might set up a cult in the manner of Auguste Comte. The cult of mankind ends in the self-enclosed humanism of Comte,

and, let it be said, of fascism. This kind of humanism we can do without.

But there is another meaning of humanism. Fundamentally it is this: man is constantly outside of himself; in projecting himself, in losing himself outside of himself, he makes for man's existing; and, on the other hand, it is by pursuing transcendent goals that he is able to exist; man, being this state of passing beyond, and seizing upon things only as they bear upon this passing beyond, is at the heart, at the center of this passing beyond. There is no universe other than a human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. This connection between transcendency, as a constituent element of man—not in the sense that God is transcendent, but in the sense of passing beyond—and subjectivity, in the sense that man is not closed in on himself but is always present in a human universe, is what we call "Existentialist humanism." Humanism, because we remind man that there is no lawmaker other than himself, and that in his forlornness he will decide by himself; because we point out that man will fulfill himself as man, not in turning toward himself, but in seeking outside of himself a goal which is just this liberation, just this particular fulfillment.

From these few reflections it is evident that nothing is more unjust than the objections that have been raised against us. Existentialism is nothing else than an attempt to draw all the consequences of a coherent atheistic position. It isn't trying to plunge man into despair at all. But if one calls every attitude of unbelief despair, like the Christians, then the word is not being used in its original sense. Existentialism isn't so atheistic that it wears itself out showing that God doesn't exist. Rather, it declares that even if God did exist, that would change nothing. There you've got our point of view. Not that we believe that God exists, but we think that the problem of His existence is not the issue. In this sense Existentialism is optimistic, a doctrine of action, and it is plain dishonesty for Christians to make no distinction between their own despair and ours and then to call us despairing.

MATERIALISM AND REVOLUTION[1]

The Revolutionary Myth

Young people of today are uneasy. They no longer recognize their right to be young. It is as though youth were not an age of life, but a class phenomenon, an unduly prolonged childhood, a spell of irresponsibility accorded to the children of the well-to-do. The workers go without transition from adolescence to manhood. And it really does look as though our age, which is in the process of eliminating the various European bourgeoisies, is also eliminating that abstract and metaphysical period of which people have always said, "It will have its fling." Most of my former students have married early because they felt ashamed of their youth and of the leisure that was once the fashion.

They have become fathers before they have finished their studies. They still receive money from their families at the end of each month, but it is not enough. They have to give lessons or do translations or odd jobs. They are part-time workers. In one way, they are like kept women and, in another, like "home-workers." They no longer take the time, as we did at their age, to play about with ideas before adopting one set in particular. They are fathers and citizens, they vote, they must commit themselves. This is probably not a bad thing. It is fitting, after all, that they be asked to choose immediately for or against man, for or against the masses. But if they choose the first side, their difficulties begin, because they are persuaded that they must strip themselves of their subjectivity. If they consider doing this, it is for reasons which remain subjective, as they are still inside. They take counsel with *themselves* before

[1] As I have been unfairly reproached with not quoting Marx in this article, I should like to point out that my criticisms are not directed against him, but against the Marxist scholasticism of 1949. Or, if you prefer, against Marx *through* Neo-Stalinist Marxism. [All notes in this selection are Sartre's.]

plunging *themselves* into the water and, as a result, the more seriously they contemplate abandoning subjectivity, the greater the importance it assumes in their eyes. And they realize, with annoyance, that their notion of objectivity is still subjective. Thus they go round and round, unable to choose sides, and if they do come to a decision, they jump in with their eyes shut, out of weariness or impatience.

However, that is not the end of it. They are now told to choose between materialism and idealism; they are told that there is nothing in between and that it must be one or the other. Now, to most of them, the principles of materialism seem philosophically false; they are unable to understand how matter could give rise to the *idea* of matter. Nevertheless, they protest that they utterly reject idealism. They know that it acts as a myth for the propertied classes and that it is not a rigorous philosophy but a rather vague kind of thinking whose function is to mask reality or to absorb it into the idea. "It doesn't matter," they are told. "Since you are not materialists, you will be idealists in spite of yourselves, and if you rebel against the quibbling of the professors, you will find yourselves the victims of a more subtle and all the more dangerous illusion."

Thus, they are hounded even in their thoughts, which are poisoned at the source, and they are condemned to serve unwillingly a philosophy they detest or to adopt out of discipline a doctrine in which they are unable to believe. They have lost the carefree quality characteristic of their age without acquiring the certainty of maturity. They are no longer at leisure and yet they cannot commit themselves. They remain at the threshold of Communism without daring either to enter or to go away. They are not guilty; it is not their fault if the very people who at present invoke the dialectic wish to force them to choose between two opposites and reject, with the contemptuous name of "Third Party," the synthesis which embraces them. Since they are deeply sincere and hope for the coming of a socialist regime, since they are prepared to serve the Revolution with all their might, the only way to help them is to ask oneself, as they do, whether materialism and the myth of objectivity are really required by the cause of the Revolution and if there is not a discrepancy between the revolutionary's action and

his ideology. I shall therefore turn back to materialism and attempt to reexamine it.

It seems as though its first step is to deny the existence of God and transcendent finality; the second, to reduce the action of mind to that of matter; the third, to eliminate subjectivity by reducing the world, and man in it, to a system of objects linked together by universal relationships. I conclude in all good faith that it is a metaphysical doctrine and that materialists are metaphysicians. But they immediately stop me. I am wrong. There is nothing they loathe so much as metaphysics; it is not even certain that philosophy finds favor in their eyes. Dialectical materialism is, according to M. Naville, "the expression of a progressive discovery of the world's interactions, a discovery which is in no way passive but which implies the activity of the discoverer, seeker and struggler." According to M. Garaudy, dialectical materialism's first step is to deny the existence of any legitimate knowledge apart from scientific knowledge. And for Madame Angrand, one cannot be a materialist without first rejecting all *a priori* speculation.

This invective against metaphysics is an old acquaintance. It goes back to the writings of the positivists of the last century. But the positivists, who were more logical, refused to take a stand as to the existence of God because they considered all possible conjecture on the subject to be unverifiable, and they abandoned, once and for all, all speculation on the relation between body and mind because they thought that we could not know anything about it. It is indeed obvious that the atheism of M. Naville or Madame Angrand is not "the expression of a progressive discovery." It is a clear and *a priori* stand on a problem which infinitely transcends our experience. This is also my own stand, but I did not consider myself to be any the less a metaphysician in refusing existence to God than Leibnitz was in granting it to Him. And by what miracle is the materialist, who accuses idealists of indulging in metaphysics when they reduce matter to mind, absolved from the same charge when he reduces mind to matter? Experience does not decide in favor of his doctrine—nor, for that matter, does it decide in favor of the opposing one either. Experience is confined to displaying the close connection between the physiological and the psychological, and this connection is subject to a thousand different kinds of inter-

pretation. When the materialist claims to be *certain* of his principles, his assurance can come only from intuition or *a priori* reasoning, that is, from the very speculation he condemns. I now realize that materialism is a metaphysics hiding behind positivism; but it is a self-destructive metaphysics, for by undermining metaphysics out of principle, it deprives its own statements of any foundation.

It thereby also destroys the positivism under which it takes cover. It was out of modesty that Comte's disciples reduced human knowledge to mere scientific knowledge alone. They confined reason within the narrow limits of our experience because it was there only that reason proved to be effective. The success of science was for them a fact, but it was a *human* fact. From the point of view of man, and for man, it is true that science succeeds. They took good care not to ask themselves whether the universe *in itself* supported and guaranteed scientific rationalism, for the very good reason that they would have had to depart from themselves and from mankind in order to compare the universe as it *is* with the picture of it we get from science, and to assume God's point of view on man and the world. The materialist, however, is not so shy. He leaves behind him science and subjectivity and the human and substitutes himself for God, Whom he denies, in order to contemplate the spectacle of the universe. He calmly writes, "The materialist conception of the world means simply the conception of nature as it is, without anything foreign added." [2]

What is involved in this surprising text is the elimination of human subjectivity, that "addition foreign to nature." The materialist thinks that by denying his subjectivity he has made it disappear. But the trick is easy to expose. *In order* to eliminate subjectivity, the materialist declares that he is an *object*, that is, the subject matter of science. But once he has eliminated subjectivity in favor of the object, instead of seeing himself as a thing among other things, buffeted about by the physical universe, he makes of himself an *objective beholder* and claims to contemplate nature as it is, in the absolute.

[2] Marx and Engels; *Complete Works;* Ludwig Feuerbach, Volume XIV, p. 651, Russian edition. I quote this passage in order to show the use made of it *today*. I plan to show elsewhere that Marx had a much deeper and richer conception of objectivity.

There is a play on the word "objectivity," which sometimes means the passive quality of the object beheld and, at other times, the absolute value of a beholder stripped of subjective weaknesses. Thus, having transcended all subjectivity and identified himself with pure objective truth, the materialist travels about in a world of objects inhabited by human objects. And when he returns from his journey, he communicates what he has seen: "Everything that is rational is real," he tells us, and "everything that is real is rational." Where does he get this rationalistic optimism? We can understand a Kantian's making statements about nature since, according to him, reason constitutes experience. But the materialist does not admit that the world is the product of our constituent activity. Quite the contrary. In his eyes it is we who are the product of the universe. How then could we know that the real is rational, since we have not created it and since we reflect only a tiny part of it from day to day? The success of science may, at the most, lead us to think that this rationality is *probable,* but it may be a matter of a local, statistical rationality. It may be valid for a certain order of size and might collapse beyond or under this limit.

Materialism makes a certainty of what appears to us to be a rash induction, or, if you prefer, a postulate. For materialism, there is no doubt. Reason is within man and outside man. And the leading materialist magazine calmly calls itself "*Thought* [*La Pensée*], the organ of modern rationalism." However, by a dialectical reversal which might have been foreseen, materialist rationalism "passes" into irrationalism and destroys itself. If the psychological fact is rigorously conditioned by the biological, and the biological fact is, in turn, conditioned by the physical state of the world, I quite see how the human mind can express the universe as an effect can express its cause, but not in the way a thought expresses its object. How could a captive reason, governed from without and maneuvered by a series of blind causes, still be reason? How could I believe in the principles of my deductions if it were only the external event which has set them down within me and if, as Hegel says, "reason is a bone"? What stroke of chance enables the raw products of circumstances to constitute the keys to Nature as well? Moreover, observe the way in which Lenin speaks of our consciousness: "It is only the reflection of being, in the best of cases

an approximately exact reflection." But who is to decide whether the present case, that is, materialism, is "the best of cases"? We would have to be within and without at the same time in order to make a comparison. And as there is no possibility of that, according to the very terms of our statement, we have no criterion for the reflection's validity, except internal and subjective criteria: its conformity with other reflections, its clarity, its distinctness and its permanence. Idealistic criteria, in short. Moreover, they determine only a truth *for man,* and this truth not being constructed like those offered by the Kantians, but experienced, will never be more than a faith without foundation, a mere matter of habit.

When materialism dogmatically asserts that the universe produces thought, it immediately passes into idealist scepticism. It lays down the inalienable rights of Reason with one hand and takes them away with the other. It destroys positivism with a dogmatic rationalism. It destroys both of them with the metaphysical affirmation that man is a material object, and it destroys this affirmation by the radical negation of all metaphysics. It sets science against metaphysics and, unknowingly, *a* metaphysics against science. All that remains is ruins. Therefore, can I be a materialist?

It may be objected that I have understood nothing of the matter, that I have confused the naïve materialism of Helvetius and Holbach with *dialectical* materialism. There is, I am told, a dialectical movement within nature whereby opposites which clash are suddenly surmounted and reunited in a new synthesis; and this new product "passes" in turn into its opposite and then blends with it in another synthesis. I immediately recognize the characteristic movement of the Hegelian dialectic, which is based entirely on the dynamism of Ideas. I recall how, in Hegel's philosophy, one Idea leads to another, how every Idea produces its opposite. I know that the impulse behind this immense movement is the attraction exerted by the future on the present, and by the whole, even when it does not exist, on its parts. This is as true of the partial syntheses as of the absolute Totality which finally becomes Mind.

The principle of this Dialectic is, thus, that a whole governs its parts, that an idea tends of itself to complete and to enrich itself, that the forward movement of consciousness is not linear, like that which proceeds from cause to effect, but synthetic and multi-

dimensional, since every idea retains within itself and assimilates to itself the totality of antecedent ideas, that the structure of the concept is not the simple juxtaposition of invariable elements which might, if necessary, combine with other elements to produce other combinations, but rather an organization whose unity is such that its secondary structures cannot be considered apart from the whole without becoming "abstract" and losing their essential character.

One can readily accept this dialectic in the realm of ideas. Ideas are naturally synthetic. It appears, however, that Hegel has inverted it and that it is, in reality, characteristic of matter. And if you ask what *kind* of matter, you will be told that there is only one kind and that it is the matter of which scientists talk. Now the fact is that matter is characterized by its inertia. This means that it is incapable of producing anything by itself. It is a vehicle of movements and of energy, and it always receives these movements and this energy from without. It borrows them and relinquishes them. The mainspring of all dialectics is the idea of totality. In it, phenomena are never isolated appearances. When they occur together, it is always within the high unity of a whole, and they are bound together by inner relationships, that is, the presence of one modifies the other in its inner nature. But the universe of science is quantitative, and quantity is the very opposite of the dialectical unit. A sum is a unit only in appearance. Actually, the elements which compose it maintain only relations of contiguity and simultaneity; they are there together, and that is all. A numerical unit is in no way influenced by the co-presence of another unit; it remains inert and separated within the number it helps to form. And this state of things is indeed necessary in order for us to be able to count; for were two phenomena to occur in intimate union and modify one another reciprocally, we should be unable to decide whether we were dealing with two separate terms or with only one. Thus, as scientific matter represents, in a way, the realization of quantity, science is, by reason of its inmost concerns, its principles and its methods, the opposite of dialectics.

When science speaks of forces that are applied to a point of matter, its first concern is to assert their independence; each one acts as though it were alone. When science studies the attraction exerted by bodies upon one another, it is careful to define the

attraction as a strictly external relationship, that is to reduce it to modifications in the direction and speed of their movements. Science does occasionally employ the word "synthesis," for example, in regard to chemical combinations. But it never does so in the Hegelian sense; the particles forming a combination retain their properties. If an atom of oxygen combines with atoms of sulphur and hydrogen to form acid, it retains its identity. Neither water nor acid is a real whole which changes and governs its composing elements, but simply a passive resultant, a *state*. The entire effort of biology is aimed at reducing the so-called living syntheses to physicochemical processes. And when M. Naville, who is a materialist, feels the need to construct a scientific psychology, he turns to "behaviorism" which regards human conduct as a sum of conditioned reflexes. Nowhere in the universe of science do we encounter an organic totality. The instrument of the scientist is analysis. His aim is to reduce the complex to the simple, and the recomposition which he afterwards effects is only a counterproof, whereas the dialectician, on principle, considers these complexes as irreducible.

Of course, Engels claims that "the natural sciences . . . have proved that, in the last analysis, Nature proceeds dialectically, that it does not move in an eternally identical circle that perpetually repeats itself, but that it has a real history." In support of his thesis, he cites the example of Darwin: "Darwin inflicted a severe blow to the metaphysical conception of Nature by demonstrating that the entire organic world . . . is the product of a process of development that has been going on for millions of years." [3] But, first of all, it is obvious that the notion of *natural history* is absurd. History cannot be characterized by change or by the pure and simple action of the past. It is defined by the deliberate resumption of the past by the present; only human history is possible. Besides, if Darwin has shown that the species derive from one another, his attempt at explanation is of a mechanical and not dialectical order. He accounts for individual differences by the theory of small variations, and he regards each of these variations as the result not of a "process of development," but of mechanical chance. In a group of individuals of the same species, it is statistically impossible that

[3] Engels.

there not be some who are superior in weight, strength or some particular detail. As to the struggle for existence, it cannot *produce* a new synthesis through the fusion of opposites; it has strictly negative effects, since it *eliminates* definitively the weaker elements. In order to understand it, all we need do is compare its results with the really dialectical ideal of the class struggle. In the latter case, the proletariat will absorb the bourgeoisie within the unity of a classless society. In the struggle for existence, the strong simply cause the weak to disappear. Finally, the chance advantage *does not develop:* it remains inert and is transmitted unchanged by heredity; it is a *state,* and it is not this state which will be modified by an inner dynamism to produce a higher degree of organization. Another chance variation will simply be joined to it from without, and the process of elimination will recur mechanically. Are we to conclude that Engels is irresponsible or dishonest? In order to prove that Nature has a history, he uses a scientific hypothesis that is explicitly meant to reduce all natural history to mechanical series.

Is Engels more responsible when speaking of physics? "In physics," he tells us, "every change is a transition from quantity to quality, from the quantity of movement—of any form whatever—inherent in the body or communicated to the body. Thus, the temperature of water in the liquid state is, at first, unimportant, but if you increase or diminish the temperature of the water, there comes a moment when its state of cohesion is modified and the water is transformed, in one case into vapor and in another into ice." But he is tricking us; it is all done with mirrors. The fact is that scientific investigation is not in the least concerned with demonstrating the transition from quantity to quality; it starts from the perceptible quality, which is regarded as an illusory and subjective appearance, in order to find behind it the quantity which is regarded as the truth of the universe. Engels naïvely regards temperature as if it were, as a matter of *primary* data, a pure quantity. But actually it appears first as a quality; it is the state of discomfort or of contentment which causes us to button up our coats or else to take them off. The scientist has reduced this perceptible quality to a quantity in agreeing to substitute the measurement of cubic expansions of a liquid for the vague information of our senses. The trans-

formation of water into steam is for him an equally quantitative phenomenon or, if you prefer, it exists for him only as quantity. He defines steam in terms of pressure or of some kinetic theory which reduces it to a certain quantitative state (position, speed) of its molecules. We must therefore choose. Either we remain within the domain of perceptible quality, in which case steam is a quality and so is temperature; we are not being scientific; we witness the action of one quality on another. Or else we regard temperature as a quantity. But then the transition from the liquid to the gaseous state is scientifically defined as a quantitative change, that is, by a measurable pressure exerted on a piston or by measurable relationships among molecules. For the scientist, quantity gives rise to quantity; laws are quantitative formulas and science possesses no symbol for the expression of quality as such. What Engels claims to present as a scientific procedure is the pure and simple movement of his mind which passes from the universe of science to that of naïve realism and back again to the scientific world and the world of pure sensation. And besides, even if we were to allow him this, does this intellectual coming and going in the least resemble a dialectical process? Where does he see a progression? Let us concede that the change of temperature, regarded as quantitative, produces a qualitative transformation of water; water is changed into vapor. What then? It will exert a pressure on an escape-valve and raise it; it will shoot up into the air, grow cold and become water again. Where is the progression? I see a cycle. To be sure, the water is no longer contained in the recipient, but is outside, on the grass and the earth, in the form of dew. But in the name of what metaphysics can this change of place be regarded as a progress? [4]

[4] Let no one hope to get out of the difficulty at this point by talking of intensive quantities. Bergson long ago demonstrated the confusion and error of this myth of intensive quantity which was the undoing of the psychophysicists. Temperature, as we feel it, is a quality. It is not warmer today than it was yesterday, but warm in a different way. And, conversely, the *degree*, measured according to cubic expansion is a pure and simple quantity, to which there remains attached, in the mind of the layman, a vague idea of perceptible quality. And modern physics, far from retaining this ambiguous notion, reduces heat to certain atomic *movements*. What becomes of intensity? And what are the intensities of a sound or a light, if not mathematical relationships?

It will perhaps be objected that certain modern theories—like that of Einstein—are synthetic. We know that in his system there are no longer any isolated elements; each reality is defined in relation to the universe. There is considerable matter for discussion here. I shall confine myself to observing that there is no question of a synthesis, for the relations which can be established among the various structures of a synthesis are *internal* and *qualitative,* whereas the relations which, in Einstein's theory, enable us to define a position or a mass remain *quantitative* and *external.* Moreover, the question lies elsewhere. Whether the scientist be Newton, Archimedes, Laplace or Einstein, he studies not the concrete totality, but the general and abstract conditions of the universe. Not the *particular* event which catches and absorbs into itself light, heat and life and which we call the "glistening of the sun through leaves on a summer's day," but light in general, heat phenomena, the general conditions of life. There is never any question of examining *this particular* refraction through *this particular* piece of glass which has its history and which, from a certain point of view, is regarded as the concrete synthesis of the universe, but the conditions of possibility of refraction *in general.* Science is made up of *concepts,* in the Hegelian sense of the term. Dialectics, on the other hand, is essentially the play of notions. We know that for Hegel the notion organizes and fuses concepts together in the organic and living unity of concrete reality. The Earth, the Renaissance, colonization in the eighteenth century, Nazism, are objects of *notions;* being, light and energy are abstract concepts. Dialectical enrichment lies in the transition from the abstract to the concrete, that is, from elementary concepts to notions of greater and greater richness. The movement of the dialectic is thus the reverse of that of science.

"It is true," a Communist intellectual admitted to me, "that science and dialectics pull in opposite directions. But that is because science expresses the bourgeois point of view, which is an analytical one. Our dialectic is, on the other hand, the very thought of the proletariat." That is all very well—even though Soviet science does not seem to differ much in its methods from that of the bourgeois countries—but why, in that case, do the Communists borrow arguments and proofs from science in order to support their materialism? I agree that the basic spirit of science is materialist.

But on the other hand it is presented to us as being analytic and bourgeois. The positions are thereby reversed, and I distinctly see two classes struggling. One, the bourgeoisie, is materialist; its method of thinking is analysis, and its ideology is science. The other, the proletariat, is idealist; its method of thinking is synthesis, and its ideology is dialectic. And as there is a struggle between the classes, the ideologies should be incompatible. But this is not the case. It seems that the dialectic is the crown of science and makes full use of its results. It seems that the bourgeoisie, availing itself of analysis and then reducing the higher to the lower, is idealist, whereas the proletariat—which thinks synthetically and is guided by the revolutionary idea—even when affirming the irreducibility of a synthesis to its elements, is materialist. What are we to make of this?

Let us come back to science which, whether bourgeois or not, has at least proved itself. We know what science teaches us about matter. A material object is animated from without, is conditioned by the total state of the world, is subject to forces which always come from elsewhere, is composed of elements that unite, though without interpenetrating, and that remain foreign to it. It is exterior to itself. Its most obvious properties are statistical; they are merely the resultant of the movements of the molecules composing it. Nature, as Hegel so profoundly remarked, is externality. How are we to find room in this externality for the dialectic, which is a movement of absolute interiorization? Is it not obvious that, according to the very idea of synthesis, life cannot be reduced to matter and human consciousness cannot be reduced to life? There is the same discrepancy between modern science, which is the object of materialist love and faith, and the dialectic which the materialists claim to be their instrument and method, as we observed earlier between their positivism and their metaphysics; the one destroys the other. Thus, they will sometimes tell you, and with the same imperturbability, that life is only a complex chain of physicochemical phenomena and, at other times, that it is an irreducible moment in the dialectic of nature. Or rather, they dishonestly try to think both ways at the same time.

One feels throughout their confused discourse that they have invented the slippery and contradictory notion of reducible irre-

ducibles. M. Garaudy is satisfied with this. But when we hear him speak, we are struck with his wavering; at one moment he affirms, in the abstract, that mechanical determinism has had its day and that it must be replaced by the dialectic and, at another, when he tries to explain a concrete situation, he reverts to causal relationships, which are linear and presuppose the absolute externality of the cause in relation to its effect. It is this notion of *cause,* perhaps, which best indicates the great intellectual confusion into which the materialists have fallen. When I challenged M. Naville to define within the framework of the dialectic this famous causality which he is so fond of employing, he seemed troubled and remained silent. How well I understand him! I would even say that the idea of cause remains suspended between scientific relationships and dialectical syntheses. Since materialism is, as we have seen, an *explanatory* metaphysics (it tries to *explain* certain social phenomena in terms of others, the psychological in terms of the biological, the biological in terms of physicochemical laws), it employs on principle the scheme of causality.

But as materialism sees in science the explanation of the universe, it turns to science and observes with surprise that the causal link is not scientific. Where is the cause in Joule's law or Mariotte's law or in Archimedes' principle or in Carnot's? Science generally establishes functional relationships between phenomena and selects the independent variable that suits its purpose. It is, moreover, strictly impossible to express the qualitative relationship of causality in mathematical language. Most physical laws simply take the form of functions of the type $y = f\ (x)$. Some set up numerical constants, and others give us phases of irreversible phenomena, but without our being able to tell whether one of these phases is a *cause* of the following one. (Can one say that nuclear dissolution in mitosis is a *cause* of the segmentation of the protoplasmic filament?) Thus, materialist causality remains suspended in air. The reason is that its origin lies in the metaphysical intention of reducing mind to matter and explaining the psychological by the physical. Disappointed because science offers *too little* to bolster his causal explanations, the materialist reverts to the dialectic. But the dialectic contains *too much;* the causal link is linear and the cause remains external to its effect. In addition, the effect never

contains more than the cause; if it did, this residue would, according to the perspectives of causal explanation, remain unexplained. Dialectical progress is, on the contrary, cumulative; at each new stage, it turns back to the ensemble of positions transcended and embraces them all. And the transition from one state to another is always a process of enrichment. The synthesis always contains *more* than the united thesis and antithesis. Thus the materialist cause can neither draw its support from science nor hang on to dialectic; it remains a vulgar and practical notion, the sign of materialism's constant effort to bend one toward the other and to join by force two mutually exclusive methods; it is the very type of the false synthesis and the use of it is dishonest.

This is nowhere more evident than in the Marxists' efforts to study "superstructures." For them, these are, in a sense, the "reflections" of the mode of production. "If," writes Stalin, "under a regime of slavery we encounter certain ideas and social theories, certain opinions and political institutions, while under feudalism we find others, and under Capitalism still others, this is not to be explained by 'nature' or by the 'properties' of ideas, theories, opinions and political institutions themselves, but by the different conditions of the material life of society at different periods of social development. The state of society and the conditions of its material existence are what determine its ideas, theories, political opinions and political institutions." [5]

The use of the term "reflection" and the verb "determine," as well as the general tone of this passage are sufficiently revealing. We are on deterministic ground; the superstructure is completely supported and conditioned by the social situation of which it is the reflection; the relationship of the mode of production to the political institution is that of cause to effect. Thus, we have the case of the simpleminded thinker who regarded Spinoza's philosophy as a direct reflection of the Dutch wheat trade. But at the same time, for the very purposes of Marxist propaganda, ideologies must be, to a certain extent, self-sufficient and be able to act in turn upon the social situation that conditions them. That means, in short, a certain autonomy in relation to the substructures. As a result, the Marxists fall back on the dialectic and make of the

[5] Stalin, *Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism*.

superstructure a synthesis that does, to be sure, proceed from conditions of production and of material existence, but whose nature and laws of development have a real "independence." In the same pamphlet, Stalin writes, "New social ideas and theories arise only when the development of the material existence of society confronts society with new tasks. . . . If new social theories and ideas arise, they do so because they are necessary to society, because without their organizing, mobilizing and transforming action, the solution of urgent problems entailed by the development of the material existence of society is *impossible*." [6]

In this text, as is apparent, necessity has assumed a completely different aspect; an idea arises because it is necessary to the carrying out of a new task. This means that the task, even before it is carried out, *calls forth* the idea which "will facilitate" its being carried out. The idea is postulated and worked by a vacuum which it then fills. The word "evoked" is actually the one which Stalin uses a few lines later. This action of the future, this necessity which is one with finality, this organizing, mobilizing and transforming power of the idea very clearly leads us back to the terrain of the Hegelian dialectic. But how can I believe in both of Stalin's affirmations at once? Is the idea "determined by the state of society" or "evoked by the new tasks to be carried out"? Am I to think, as he does, that "society's mental life is a reflection of objective reality, a *reflection* of being," that is a derived and borrowed reality which has no *being* of its own, something analogous to the "lecta" of the Stoics? Or, on the contrary, am I to declare, with Lenin, that "ideas become living realities when they live in the consciousness of the masses"? Which am I to accept, a causal and linear relationship implying the inertia of the effect, of the reflection, or a dialectical and synthetic relationship which would imply that the last synthesis turns back to the partial syntheses which have produced it in order to embrace them and absorb them into itself, and, consequently, that the mental life, although proceeding from the material conditions of society, turns back to them and completely absorbs them? The materialists are unable to decide: they waver between one and the other. They assert abstractly the existence of dialectic progression, but their concrete studies are

[6] My italics.—J.-P.S.

limited, for the most part, to Taine's explanations in terms of environmental determinism and the historical moment.[7]

That is not all. What exactly is this concept of *matter* that the dialecticians employ? If they borrow it from science, the poorer concept will fuse with other concepts in order to arrive at a concrete notion, the richer one. This notion will finally include within it, as one of its structures, the concept of matter, but far from being explained by it, the contrary will occur: the notion will explain the concept. In this case, one can start with matter as the emptier of the abstractions. One can also start from Being, as Hegel does. The difference is not very great, though the Hegelian point of departure, being more abstract, is the happier choice. But if we must really *invert* the Hegelian dialectic and "stand it on its feet again," it must be admitted that matter, chosen as a point of departure for the dialectical movement, does not appear to the Marxists to be the poorer concept, but the richer notion. It is identified with the whole universe; it is the unity of all phenomena; life, thoughts and individuals are merely its modes. It is, in short, the great Spinozist totality.

But if this be the case and if Marxist matter be the exact counterpart of Hegelian spirit, we arrive at the following paradoxical result: that Marxism, in order to stand the dialectic on its feet again, has set the richer notion at the point of departure. And certainly for Hegel the spirit exists from the start, but as a virtuality, as a summons; the dialectic is one with its history. For the Marxists, on the other hand, it is all of matter, as act, that is given in the first place, and the dialectic, whether applied to the history of species or to the evolution of human societies, is merely the retracing of the partial development of one of the modes of this reality. But then if the dialectic is not the very generating of the world, if it is not an act of progressive enriching, it is nothing at all. In obligingly dismissing the dialectic, Marxism has given it its deathblow. "Save me from my friends," one thinks. You may wonder how this could have passed unnoticed. Because our materialists have dishonestly constructed a slippery and contradictory concept of "matter." At times it is the poorest of abstractions and at others

[7] Only they define the environment more precisely in terms of the material conditions of existence.

the richest of concrete totalities, depending on their needs. They jump from one to the other and mask one with the other. And when they are finally cornered and can no longer escape, they declare that materialism is a method, an intellectual orientation. If you pushed them a bit further, they would say it is a style of living. They are not far wrong in this, and I, for my part, certainly regard it as one of the forms of the conventional mentality and of flight from one's own self.

But if materialism is a *human attitude,* with all the subjective, contradictory and emotional aspects involved in such an attitude, it ought not to be presented as a rigorous philosophy, as the doctrine of objectivity. I have witnessed conversions to materialism; one enters into materialism as into a religion. I should define it as the subjectivity of those who are ashamed of their subjectivity. It is, of course, also the irritation of those who suffer physically and who are familiar with the reality of hunger, illness, manual work and everything that can sap a man's strength. It is, in a word, a doctrine of the first impulse. Now, the first impulse is perfectly legitimate, particularly when it expresses the spontaneous reaction of an oppressed person—but that does not mean that it is the correct impulse. It always contains an element of truth, but goes beyond it. To affirm the crushing reality of the material world in opposition to idealism is not necessarily to be a materialist. We will return to this.

Furthermore, how did the dialectic retain its necessity in its fall from heaven to earth? Hegelian consciousness has no need to set up the dialectical *hypothesis:* it is not a pure, objective witness observing the generating of ideas from without; it is itself dialectical; it is self-generating in accordance with the laws of synthetic progression. There is no need for it to *assume* necessity in relationships; it *is* this necessity; it experiences this necessity. And its certainty does not come from some evidence that is more or less open to criticism, but from the progressive identification of the dialectic of consciousness with the consciousness of the dialectic. If, on the other hand, the dialectic represents the way in which the material world develops, if consciousness, far from wholly identifying itself with the whole dialectic, is but a "reflection of being," a partial product, a moment of synthetic progress, if, instead of

taking part in its own generation from within, it is invaded from the outside by feelings and ideologies which have their roots elsewhere and if it is influenced by them without producing them, it is merely a link in a chain whose beginning and end are very far apart. And what can it say with *certainty* about the chain, unless it be the whole chain? The dialectic deposits a few effects in it and pursues its way.

On considering these effects, one may conclude that they bear witness to the probable existence of a synthetic mode of progression. Or else one may form conjectures on the consideration of exterior phenomena. In any case, one must be content with regarding the dialectic as a working hypothesis, as a method to be tried, a method which is justified if proved successful. How is it that the materialists regard this method of research as a structure of the universe and that some of them declare that "the reciprocal relationships and conditioning of phenomena, established by the dialectical method, constitute the necessary laws of matter in motion" [8] since the natural sciences proceed in a spirit contrary to this and use rigorously opposite methods, since the science of history is only in its primary stages? It is obviously because, in transferring the dialectic from one world to the other, they did not want to forego the advantages it had enjoyed in the first world. They retained its necessity and certainty, while removing the means they had of checking them. They wished, thus, to give matter the mode of synthetic development which belongs only to the idea and they borrowed from the reflection of the idea in itself a kind of certainty which has no place in the world's experience. But matter itself thereby becomes an idea; it nominally retains its denseness, inertia and exteriority, but it presents, in addition, a perfect translucency—since one can decide, with complete certainty and on principle, about its internal processes—it is a synthesis, it progresses through constant enrichment.

Let us make no mistake; there is no simultaneous transcendence of materialism and idealism here; [9] denseness and transparency,

[8] Stalin, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

[9] Although Marx sometimes claimed there was. In 1844 he wrote that the antinomy between idealism and materialism would have to be transcended, and Henri Lefebvre, commenting on his thinking, states

exteriority and interiority, inertia and synthetic progression are simply juxtaposed in the spurious unity of "dialectical materialism." Matter has remained that which is revealed to us by science. There has been no combination of opposites, for lack of a new concept which might establish them within itself, something which is not exactly matter nor exactly idea. Their opposition cannot be surmounted by surreptitiously attributing the qualities of one of these opposites to the other. Actually, it must be admitted that materialism, in claiming to be dialectical, slides into idealism.

Just as the Marxists claim to be positivists and destroy their positivism through the use they implicitly make of metaphysics, just as they proclaim their rationalism and destroy it by their conception of the origin of thought, so, at the very moment they posit it, they deny their basic principle, materialism, by a furtive recourse to idealism.[10]

This confusion is reflected in the materialist's attitude toward his own doctrine; he claims to be *certain* of his principles, but he asserts more than he is able to prove. "The materialist *grants,* . . ."

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in *Matérialisme Dialectique* (pp. 53, 54), "Historical materialism which is clearly expressed in *Deutsche Ideologie,* attains the unity of idealism and materialism foreshadowed and announced in the Manuscripts of 1844." But then why does M. Garaudy, another spokesman for Marxism, write in *Les Lettres Françaises,* "Sartre rejects materialism and claims, nevertheless, to avoid idealism. That is where the futility of that impossible 'third party' reveals itself. . . ." How confused these people are!

[10] It may be objected that I have not spoken of the common source of all transformations in the universe, which is energy, and that I have taken up my position on the ground of mechanism in order to appraise dynamic materialism. My reply is that energy is not a directly perceived reality, but a concept fashioned in order to account for certain phenomena, that scientists are familiar with it through its effects rather than through its nature, and that at the most they know, as Poincaré said, that "something remains." Besides, the little we can state about energy is in rigorous opposition to the demands of dialectical materialism. Its total quantity is conserved, it is transmitted in discrete quantities, it undergces a constant reduction. This last principle, in particular, is incompatible with the demands of a dialectic which claims to be enriched with each step. And let us not forget, moreover, that a body always receives its energy from without (even intra-atomic energy is so received); it is within the framework of the general principle of inertia that we are able to study the problem of equivalence of energy. To make energy the vehicle of the dialectic would be to transform it by violence into *idea.*

says Stalin. But why does he grant it? Why grant that God does not exist, that mind is a reflection of matter, that the world's development proceeds through the conflict of opposite forces, that there is an objective truth, that there are no unknowable things in the world, but only things that are still unknown? We are not told why. But if it is true that "new ideas and social theories called forth by the new tasks imposed by the development of society's material existence spring up, become the heritage of the masses which they mobilize and organize against society's decadent forces, thus promoting the overthrowing of these forces which hinder the development of society's material existence," it seems clear that these ideas are adopted by the proletariat because they account for its present situation and needs, because they are the most efficient instrument in its struggle against the bourgeoisie. "The failure of the Utopians, including the populists, anarchists, and Socialist Revolutionaries, can be explained, among other ways," says Stalin in the forementioned work, "by the fact that they do not recognize the major role of material conditions in the development of society. Fallen into idealism, they base their practical activity, not on the needs of the development of material existence in society, but independently and in defiance of these needs, on 'ideal levels' and 'universal projects' detached from the real life of society.

"The strength and vitality of Marxism-Leninism lies in the fact that it bases its practical activity on precisely those needs of the development of the material existence of society without ever detaching itself from the real life of society." Though materialism may be the best instrument for action, its truth is of a pragmatic kind. It is true for the working class, because it is good for it, and since social progress is to be brought about by the working class, it is truer than idealism, which served the interests of the bourgeoisie for a while when it was a rising class, and which today can only obstruct the development of the material existence of society. But when the proletariat will finally have absorbed the bourgeoisie and brought about the classless society, new tasks will make their appearance, tasks which will "give rise to" new ideas and social theories.

Materialism will have had its day, since it is the mode of thought of the working class and the working class will no longer exist.

Regarded objectively as an expression of class needs and tasks, materialism becomes an *opinion,* that is, a mobilizing, transforming and organizing force whose objective reality is measured in terms of its power of action. And this opinion which claims to be certitude carries within it its own destruction, for it is obliged, in the very name of its principles, to regard itself as an objective fact, as a reflection of being, as an object of science, and, at the same time, it destroys the science which should analyze and establish it—at least as an opinion. The circle is obvious, and the whole system remains suspended in air, perpetually floating between being and nothingness.

The Stalinist extricates himself through faith. If he "grants" materialism, it is because he wants to act and to change the world. When one is engaged in so vast an enterprise, one hasn't the time to be too particular about the choice of principles justifying it. He believes in Marx, Lenin and Stalin, he admits of the principle of authority, and, finally, he retains the blind and tranquil faith in the certitude of Marxism. This conviction will influence his general attitude toward all ideas proposed to him. Scrutinize closely one of his doctrines or one of his concrete assertions and he will say that he has no time to waste, that the situation is urgent, that he has to act, to attend to first things first and to work for the revolution. Later on we will have the leisure to challenge principles—or rather they will challenge themselves. But for the moment, we have to reject all argument, because it is liable to have a weakening effect. That is quite all right, but when it's his turn to attack and to criticize bourgeois thinking or a particular intellectual position that he judges to be reactionary, he then claims to possess the truth.

The same principles which he just told you could not be disputed at the time suddenly became patent facts. They pass from the level of useful opinions to that of truths. "The Trotskyists," you say to him, "are wrong, but they are not, as you claim, police informers. You *know perfectly well* they are not." "On the contrary," he will reply, "I know perfectly well that they are. What they really think is a matter of indifference to me. Subjectivity does not exist. But *objectively* they play into the hands of the bourgeoisie. They *behave* like provocateurs and informers, because playing into the hands of the police and deliberately assisting it

come to the same thing." You reply that it does not come to the same thing, and that in all *objectivity,* the behavior of the Trotskyist and that of the policeman are not alike. He retorts that one is as harmful as the other and that the effect of both is to hinder the advancement of the working class. And if you insist, if you demonstrate to him that there are several ways of hindering this advancement and that they are not equivalent, even in their results, he replies proudly that these distinctions, even if true, do not interest him. We are in a period of struggle; the situation is simple and the positions clearly defined. Why be oversubtle? The militant Communist must not encumber himself with so many nuances. So we are back to the useful. Thus, the proposition, "The Trotskyist is an informer," wavers perpetually between the state of useful opinion and that of objective truth.[11]

Nothing demonstrates this ambiguity in the Marxist notion of truth better than the ambivalence of the Communist attitude toward the scientist. The Communists claim to derive from him; they exploit his discoveries and make his thinking the only kind of valid knowledge. But their mistrust of him remains guarded. Insofar as they lean on the rigorously scientific idea of *objectivity,* they have need of his critical spirit, his love of research and challenging, his lucidity, which rejects the principle of authority and refers constantly to experience or rational proof. But insofar as they are believers and science challenges all beliefs, they are suspicious of these virtues. If the scientist brings his scientific qualifications with him into the Party, if he claims the right to examine principles, he becomes an "intellectual"; his dangerous freedom of thought which is an expression of his relative material independence, is countered by the faith of the militant worker who, because of his very situation, *needs* to believe in his leaders' orders.[12]

This, then, is the materialism they want me to choose, a monster, an elusive Proteus, a large, vague, contradictory semblance.

[11] This is a résumé of conversations about Trotskyism that I have had time and again with Communist intellectuals, and not the least important of them. They always follow the pattern I have just indicated.
[12] As can be seen in the Lysenko case, the scientist who recently provided Marxist politics with a groundwork by guaranteeing the truth of materialism, has to submit, in his research, to the demands of this politics. It is a vicious circle.

I am asked to choose, this very day, in all intellectual freedom, in all lucidity, and that which I am to choose freely and lucidly and with all my wits about me is a doctrine that destroys thought. I know that man has no salvation other than the liberation of the working class; I know this *before* being a materialist and from a plain inspection of the facts. I know that our intellectual interest lies with the proletariat. Is that a reason for me to demand of my thinking, which has led me to this point, that it destroy itself? Is that a reason for me to force it henceforth to abandon its criteria, to think in contradictions, to be torn between incompatible theses, to lose even the clear consciousness of itself, to launch forth blindly in a giddy flight that leads to faith? "Fall to thy knees and thou shalt believe," says Pascal. The materialist's effort is very closely akin to this.

Now, if it were only a matter of my falling to my knees, and if by this sacrifice I could assure man's happiness, I ought certainly to agree to it. But what is involved is everyone's relinquishing the right to free criticism, the right to facts, the right to truth. I am told that this will all be restored to us later, but what proof is there of this? How am I to believe in a promise made in the name of mutually destructive principles? I know only one thing, that my mind has to relinquish its independence this very day. Have I fallen into the inacceptable dilemma of betraying the proletariat in order to serve truth or betraying truth in the name of the proletariat?

If I consider the materialist faith, not in its content but in its history, as a social phenomenon, I clearly see that it is not a caprice of intellectuals nor a simple error on the part of philosophers. As far back as I go, I find it bound up with the revolutionary attitude. The first man who made a deliberate attempt to rid men of their fears and bonds, the first man who tried to abolish slavery within his domain, Epicurus, was a materialist. The materialism of the great philosophers, like that of the "intellectual societies," contributed not a little to the preparation of the French Revolution; finally, the Communists, in defense of their thesis, readily made use of an argument which bears a strange resemblance to that which the Catholic employs in the defense of his faith. "If materialism were erroneous," they say, "how do you explain the fact that it is

responsible for the unity of the working class, that it has enabled it to be led into battle and that during the last fifty years it has brought us, in spite of the most violent repression, this succession of victories?" This argument, which is scholastic, and which offers an *a posteriori* proof in terms of success, is far from insignificant.

It is a fact that materialism is now the philosophy of the proletariat precisely insofar as the proletariat is revolutionary. This austere, false doctrine is the bearer of the purest and most ardent hopes; this theory which constitutes a radical denial of man's freedom has become the most radical instrument of his liberation. That means that its content is suited to "mobilizing and organizing" revolutionary forces and, also, that there is a deep relationship between the *situation* of an oppressed class and the materialist *expression* of this situation. But we cannot conclude from this that materialism is a philosophy, and still less that it is *the* truth.

Insofar as it permits of coherent action, insofar as it expresses a concrete situation, insofar as millions of men find in it hope and the image of their condition, materialism certainly must contain some truth. But that in no way means that it is wholly true as doctrine. The truths contained in it can be shrouded and drowned in error; it is possible that in order to attend to first things first, and to get back to these truths, revolutionary thinking has sketched out a rapid and temporary structure, what dressmakers call a basted garment. In that case, materialism offers much more than is required by the revolutionary. It also offers a good deal less, for this hasty and forced joining of elements of truth prevents them from organizing spontaneously among themselves and from attaining true unity. Materialism is indisputably the *only myth* that suits revolutionary requirements.

The politician goes no further; the myth is useful and so he adopts it. But if his undertaking is a long-range affair, it is not a myth that he needs but the *Truth*. It is the philosopher's business to make the truths contained in materialism hang together and to build, little by little, a philosophy which suits the needs of the revolution as exactly as the myth does. And the best way of spotting these truths within the error in which they are steeped is to determine these requirements on the basis of a careful examination of the revolutionary attitude, to reconstruct, in each case, the path

by which they have led to the demand for a materialist representation of the universe, and to see whether they have not, each time, been deflected and diverted from their primary meaning. If they are freed from the myth which crushes them and which hides them from themselves, perhaps they may plot the main lines of a coherent philosophy which will be superior to materialism in being a *true* description of nature and of human relationships.

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

Simone de Beauvoir (1908——) is not only Sartre's intimate associate and a leading figure of the Existentialist school but the outstanding woman writer in contemporary France. She was born in Paris, where she now lives in the Latin Quarter. After receiving her Aggrégation in philosophy from the Sorbonne in 1929, she taught in Marseilles, Rouen and Paris.

Since 1942 she has devoted full time to writing and lecturing. Her novels include *The Blood of Others* (1948), *She Came To Stay* (1954), and *All Men Are Mortal* (1958). Best-known is *The Mandarins* (1956), which won France's coveted literary award, the Prix Goncourt. She has written accounts of her travels in Communist China and the United States.

She has most impressed American readers with her study of what it means to be a woman, *The Second Sex* (1952), and with the three volumes of her autobiography, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (1959), *The Prime of Life* (1962), and *Force of Circumstance* (1963).

At the end of *Being and Nothingness,* Sartre promised to devote a future work to the ethical implications of his philosophy of freedom. His collaborator sought to fulfill this intention in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1948), whose first chapter is given here.

Originally Sartre had insisted that freedom existed only within oneself; other people are a perpetual menace to my authentic existence. In *Existentialism Is a Humanism* he modified this by stating that, in choosing for myself, I actually chose for all men by projecting an image of what man should be. Simone de Beauvoir completed this shift from egoism to altruism at the base of morality by declaring that no man can save himself; the freedom of the individual can only be realized along with that of others.

Some troublesome problems remained. If I am the sole source and guarantor of moral values, what makes one value better than another or my choice of equal worth to others? Marxism solves the problem of the relativity and generality of moral values by linking the interests of the most progressive class with the welfare of mankind and making them the measuring rod for everyone's actions. Simone de Beauvoir, however, did not point to any such concrete common denominator to unite the free choice of the individual with the good of all others. Hence, the inherent inconclusiveness of her ethical position.

AMBIGUITY AND FREEDOM

Life in itself is neither good nor evil, it is the place of good and evil, according to what you make it.

—Montaigne

"The continuous work of our life," says Montaigne, "is to build death." He quotes the Latin poets: *Prima, quae vitam dedit, hora corpsit.* And again: *Nascentes morimur.* Man knows and thinks this tragic ambivalence which the animal and the plant merely undergo. A new paradox is thereby introduced into his destiny. "Rational animal," "thinking reed," he escapes from his natural condition without, however, freeing himself from it. He is still a part of this world of which he is a consciousness. He asserts himself as a pure internality against which no external power can take hold, and he also experiences himself as a thing crushed by the dark weight of other things. At every moment he can grasp the nontemporal truth of his existence. But between the past, which no longer is, and the future, which is not yet, this moment when he exists is nothing. This privilege, which he alone possesses, of being a sovereign and unique subject amidst a universe of objects, is what

he shares with all his fellowmen. In turn an object for others, he is nothing more than an individual in the collectivity on which he depends.

As long as there have been men and they have lived, they have all felt this tragic ambiguity of their condition, but as long as there have been philosophers and they have thought, most of them have tried to mask it. They have striven to reduce mind to matter, or to reabsorb matter into mind, or to merge them within a single substance. Those who have accepted the dualism have established a hierarchy between body and soul which permits of considering as negligible the part of the self which cannot be saved. They have denied death, either by integrating it with life or by promising to man immortality. Or, again they have denied life, considering it as a veil of illusion beneath which is hidden the truth of Nirvana.

And the ethics which they have proposed to their disciples has always pursued the same goal. It has been a matter of eliminating the ambiguity by making oneself pure inwardness or pure externality, by escaping from the sensible world or by being engulfed in it, by yielding to eternity or enclosing oneself in the pure moment. Hegel, with more ingenuity, tried to reject none of the aspects of man's condition and to reconcile them all. According to his system, the moment is preserved in the development of time; Nature asserts itself in the face of Spirit, which denies it while assuming it; the individual is again found in the collectivity within which he is lost; and each man's death is fulfilled by being canceled out into the Life of Mankind. One can thus repose in a marvelous optimism where even the bloody wars simply express the fertile restlessness of the Spirit.

At the present time there still exist many doctrines which choose to leave in the shadow certain troubling aspects of a too complex situation. But their attempt to lie to us is in vain. Cowardice doesn't pay. Those reasonable metaphysics, those consoling ethics with which they would like to entice us only accentuate the disorder from which we suffer. Men of today seem to feel more acutely than ever the paradox of their condition. They know themselves to be the supreme end to which all action should be subordinated, but the exigencies of action force them to treat one another as instruments or obstacles, as means. The more widespread

their mastery of the world, the more they find themselves crushed by uncontrollable forces. Though they are masters of the atomic bomb, yet it is created only to destroy them. Each one has the incomparable taste in his mouth of his own life, and yet each feels himself more insignificant than an insect within the immense collectivity whose limits are one with the earth's. Perhaps in no other age have they manifested their grandeur more brilliantly, and in no other age has this grandeur been so horribly flouted. In spite of so many stubborn lies, at every moment, at every opportunity, the truth comes to light, the truth of life and death, of my solitude and my bond with the world, of my freedom and my servitude, of the insignificance and the sovereign importance of each man and all men. There was Stalingrad and there was Buchenwald, and neither of the two wipes out the other. Since we do not succeed in fleeing it, let us therefore try to look the truth in the face. Let us try to assume our fundamental ambiguity. It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our life that we must draw our strength to live and our reason for acting.

From the very beginning, Existentialism defined itself as a philosophy of ambiguity. It was by affirming the irreducible character of ambiguity that Kierkegaard opposed himself to Hegel, and it is by ambiguity that, in our own generation, Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness,* fundamentally defined man, that being whose being is not to be, that subjectivity which realizes itself only as a presence in the world, that engaged freedom, that surging of the for-oneself which is immediately given for others. But it is also claimed that Existentialism is a philosophy of the absurd and of despair. It encloses man in a sterile anguish, in an empty subjectivity. It is incapable of furnishing him with any principle for making choices. Let him do as he pleases. In any case, the game is lost. Does not Sartre declare, in effect, that man is a "useless passion," that he tries in vain to realize the synthesis of the for-oneself and the in-oneself, to make himself God? It is true. But it is also true that the most optimistic ethics have all begun by emphasizing the element of failure involved in the condition of man; without failure, no ethics; for a being who, from the very start, would be an exact coincidence with himself, in a perfect plenitude, the notion of having-to-be would have no meaning. One does not offer an ethics

to a God. It is impossible to propose any to man if one defines him as nature, as something given. The so-called psychological or empirical ethics manage to establish themselves only by introducing surreptitiously some flaw within the man-thing which they have first defined. Hegel tells us in the last part of *The Phenomenology of Mind* that moral consciousness can exist only to the extent that there is disagreement between nature and morality. It would disappear if the ethical law became the natural law. To such an extent that by a paradoxical "displacement," if moral action is the absolute goal, the absolute goal is also that moral action may not be present. This means that there can be a having-to-be only for a being who, according to the Existentialist definition, questions himself in his being, a being who is at a distance from himself and who has to be his being.

Well and good. But it is still necessary for the failure to be surmounted, and existentialist ontology does not allow this hope. Man's passion is useless; he has no means for becoming the being that he is not. That too is true. And it is also true that in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre has insisted above all on the abortive aspect of the human adventure. It is only in the last pages that he opens up the perspective for an ethics. However, if we reflect upon his descriptions of existence, we perceive that they are far from condemning man without recourse.

The failure described in *Being and Nothingness* is definitive, but it is also ambiguous. Man, Sartre tells us, is "a being who *makes himself* a lack of being *in order that there might be* being." That means, first of all, that his passion is not inflicted upon him from without. He chooses it. It is his very being and, as such, does not imply the idea of unhappiness. If this choice is considered as useless, it is because there exists no absolute value before the passion of man, outside of it, in relation to which one might distinguish the useless from the useful. The word "useful" has not yet received a meaning on the level of description where *Being and Nothingness* is situated. It can be defined only in the human world established by man's projects and the ends he sets up. In the original helplessness from which man surges up, nothing is useful, nothing is useless. It must therefore be understood that the passion to which man has acquiesced finds no external justification. No outside appeal,

no objective necessity permits of its being called "useful." It *has* no reason to will itself. But this does not mean that it cannot justify itself, that it can not *give itself* reasons for being that it does not *have*. And indeed Sartre tells us that man makes himself this lack of being *in order that* there might be being. The term "in order that" clearly indicates an intentionality. It is not in vain that man nullifies being. Thanks to him, being is disclosed and he desires this disclosure. There is an original type of attachment to being which is not the relationship "wanting to be" but rather "wanting to disclose being." Now, here there is not failure, but rather success. This end, which man proposes to himself by making himself lack of being, is, in effect, realized by him. By uprooting himself from the world, man makes himself present to the world and makes the world present to him. I should like to be the landscape which I am contemplating, I should like this sky, this quiet water to think themselves within me, that it might be I whom they express in flesh and bone, and I remain at a distance. But it is also by this distance that the sky and the water exist before me. My contemplation is an excruciation only because it is also a joy. I cannot appropriate the snow field where I slide. It remains foreign, forbidden, but I take delight in this very effort toward an impossible possession. I experience it as a triumph, not as a defeat. This means that man, in his vain attempt to *be* God, makes himself exist *as* man, and if he is satisfied with this existence, he coincides exactly with himself. It is not granted him to exist without tending toward this being which he will never be. But it is possible for him to want this tension even with the failure which it involves. His being is lack of being, but this lack has a way of being which is precisely existence. In Hegelian terms, it might be said that we have here a negation of the negation by which the positive is reestablished. Man makes himself a lack, but he can deny the lack as lack and affirm himself as a positive existence. He then assumes the failure. And the condemned action, insofar as it is an effort to be, finds its validity insofar as it is a manifestation of existence. However, rather than being a Hegelian act of surpassing, it is a matter of a conversion. For, in Hegel, the surpassed terms are preserved only as abstract moments, whereas we consider that existence still remains a negativity in the positive affirmation of

itself. And it does not appear, in its turn, as the term of a further synthesis. The failure is not surpassed, but assumed. Existence asserts itself as an absolute which must seek its justification within itself and not suppress itself, even though it may be lost by preserving itself. To attain his truth, man must not attempt to dispel the ambiguity of his being but, on the contrary, accept the task of realizing it. He rejoins himself only to the extent that he agrees to remain at a distance from himself. This conversion is sharply distinguished from the Stoic conversion in that it does not claim to oppose to the sensible universe a formal freedom which is without content. To exist genuinely is not to deny this spontaneous movement of my transcendence, but only to refuse to lose myself in it. Existentialist conversion should rather be compared to Husserlian reduction: let man put his will to be "in parentheses" and he will thereby be brought to the consciousness of his true condition. And just as phenomenological reduction prevents the errors of dogmatism by suspending all affirmation concerning the mode of reality of the external world, whose flesh and bone presence the reduction does not, however, contest, so Existentialist conversion does not suppress my instincts, desires, plans, and passions. It merely prevents any possibility of failure by refusing to set up as absolutes the ends toward which my transcendence thrusts itself, and by considering them in their connection with the freedom which projects them.

The first implication of such an attitude is that the genuine man will not agree to recognize any foreign absolute. When a man projects into an ideal heaven that impossible synthesis of the for-itself and the in-itself that is called God, it is because he wishes the regard of this existing Being to change his existence into being; but if he agrees not to be in order to exist genuinely, he will abandon the dream of an inhuman objectivity. He will understand that it is not a matter of being right in the eyes of a God, but of being right in his own eyes. Renouncing the thought of seeking the guarantee for his existence outside of himself, he will also refuse to believe in unconditioned values which would set themselves up athwart his freedom like things. Value is this lacking-being of which freedom *makes itself* a lack; and it is because the latter makes itself a lack that value appears. It is desire which creates the

desirable, and the project which sets up the end. It is human existence which makes values spring up in the world on the basis of which it will be able to judge the enterprise in which it will be engaged. But first it locates itself beyond any pessimism, as beyond any optimism, for the fact of its original springing forth is a pure contingency. Before existence there is no more reason to exist than not to exist. The lack of existence cannot be evaluated since it is the fact on the basis of which all evaluation is defined. It cannot be compared to anything for there is nothing outside of it to serve as a term of comparison. This rejection of any extrinsic justification also confirms the rejection of an original pessimism which we posited at the beginning. Since it is unjustifiable from without, to declare from without that it is unjustifiable is not to condemn it. And the truth is that outside of existence there is nobody. Man exists. For him it is not a question of wondering whether his presence in the world is useful, whether life is worth the trouble of being lived. These questions make no sense. It is a matter of knowing whether he wants to live and under what conditions.

But if man is free to define for himself the conditions of a life which is valid in his own eyes, can he not choose whatever he likes and act however he likes? Dostoyevsky asserted, "If God does not exist, everything is permitted." Today's believers use this formula for their own advantage. To reestablish man at the heart of his destiny is, they claim, to repudiate all ethics. However, far from God's absence authorizing all license, the contrary is the case, because man is abandoned on the earth, because his acts are definitive, absolute engagements. He bears the responsibility for a world which is not the work of a strange power, but of himself, where his defeats are inscribed, and his victories as well. A God can pardon, efface, and compensate. But if God does not exist, man's faults are inexpiable. If it is claimed that, whatever the case may be, this earthly stake has no importance, this is precisely because one invokes that inhuman objectivity which we declined at the start. One cannot start by saying that our earthly destiny *has* or *has not* importance, for it depends upon us to give it importance. It is up to man to make it important to be a man, and he alone can feel his success or failure. And if it is again said that nothing forces

him to try to justify his being in this way, then one is playing upon the notion of freedom in a dishonest way. The believer is also free to sin. The divine law is imposed upon him only from the moment he decides to save his soul. In the Christian religion, though one speaks very little about them today, there are also the damned. Thus, on the earthly plane, a life which does not seek to ground itself will be a pure contingency. But it is permitted to wish to give itself a meaning and a truth, and it then meets rigorous demands within its own heart.

However, even among the proponents of secular ethics, there are many who charge Existentialism with offering no objective content to the moral act. It is said that this philosophy is subjective, even solipsistic. If he is once enclosed within himself, how can man get out? But there too we have a great deal of dishonesty. It is rather well known that the fact of being a subject is a universal fact and that the Cartesian *cogito* expresses both the most individual experience and the most objective truth. By affirming that the source of all values resides in the freedom of man, Existentialism merely carries on the tradition of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, who, in the words of Hegel himself, "have taken for their point of departure the principle according to which the essence of right and duty and the essence of the thinking and willing subject are absolutely identical." The idea that defines all humanism is that the world is not a given world, foreign to man, one to which he has to force himself to yield from without. It is the world willed by man, insofar as his will expresses his genuine reality.

Some will answer, "All well and good. But Kant escapes solipsism because for him genuine reality is the human person insofar as it transcends its empirical embodiment and chooses to be universal." And doubtless Hegel asserted that the "right of individuals to their particularity is equally contained in ethical substantiality, since particularity is the extreme, phenomenal modality in which moral reality exists (*Philosophy of Right,* § 154)." But for him particularity appears only as a moment of the totality in which it must surpass itself. Whereas for Existentialism, it is not impersonal universal man who is the source of values, but the plurality of concrete, particular men projecting themselves toward their ends on the basis of situations whose particularity is as radical and as

irreducible as subjectivity itself. How could men, originally separated, get together?

And, indeed, we are coming to the real situation of the problem. But to state it is not to demonstrate that it cannot be resolved. On the contrary, we must here again invoke the notion of Hegelian "displacement." There is an ethics only if there is a problem to solve. And it can be said, by inverting the preceding line of argument, that the ethics which have given solutions by effacing the fact of the separation of men are not valid precisely because there *is* this separation. An ethics of ambiguity will be one which will refuse to deny *a priori* that separate existants can, at the same time, be bound to each other, that their individual freedoms can forge laws valid for all.

Before undertaking the quest for a solution, it is interesting to note that the notion of situation and the recognition of separation which it implies are not peculiar to Existentialism. We also meet it in Marxism, which, from one point of view, can be considered as an apotheosis of subjectivity. Like all radical humanism, Marxism rejects the idea of an inhuman objectivity and locates itself in the tradition of Kant and Hegel. Unlike the old kind of utopian socialism, which confronted earthly order with the archetypes of Justice, Order, and Good, Marx does not consider that certain human situations are, in themselves and absolutely, preferable to others. It is the needs of people, the revolt of a class, which define aims and goals. It is from within a rejected situation, in the light of this rejection, that a new state appears as desirable; only the will of men decides; and it is on the basis of a certain individual act of rooting itself in the historical and economic world that this will thrusts itself toward the future and then chooses a perspective where such words as goal, progress, efficacy, success, failure, action, adversaries, instruments, and obstacles, have a meaning. Then certain acts can be regarded as good and others as bad.

In order for the universe of revolutionary values to arise, a subjective movement must create them in revolt and hope. And this movement appears so essential to Marxists that, if an intellectual or a bourgeois also claims to want revolution, they distrust him. They think that it is only from the outside, by abstract recognition, that the bourgeois intellectual can adhere to these values

which he himself has not set up. Regardless of what he does, his situation makes it impossible for the ends pursued by proletarians to be absolutely his ends too, since it is not the very impulse of his life which has begotten them.

However, in Marxism, if it is true that the goal and the meaning of action are defined by human wills, these wills do not appear as free. They are the reflection of objective conditions by which the situation of the class or the people under consideration is defined. In the present moment of the development of capitalism, the proletariat cannot help wanting its elimination as a class. Subjectivity is reabsorbed into the objectivity of the given world. Revolt, need, hope, rejection, and desire are only the resultants of external forces. The psychology of behavior endeavors to explain this alchemy.

It is known that that is the essential point on which Existentialist ontology is opposed to dialectical materialism. We think that the meaning of the situation does not impose itself on the consciousness of a passive subject, that it surges up only by the disclosure which a free subject effects in his project. It appears evident to us that in order to adhere to Marxism, to enroll in a party, and in one rather than another, to be actively attached to it, even a Marxist needs a decision whose source is only in himself. And this autonomy is not the privilege (or the defect) of the intellectual or the bourgeois. The proletariat, taken as a whole, as a class, can become conscious of its situation in more than one way. It can want the revolution to be brought about by one party or another. It can let itself be lured on, as happened to the German proletariat, or can sleep in the dull comfort which capitalism grants it, as does the American proletariat. It may be said that in all these cases it is betraying; still, it must be free to betray. Or, if one pretends to distinguish the real proletariat from a treacherous proletariat, or a misguided or unconscious or mystified one, then it is no longer a flesh and blood proletariat that one is dealing with, but the idea of a proletariat, one of those ideas which Marx ridiculed.

Besides, in practice, Marxism does not *always* deny freedom. The very notion of action would lose all meaning if history were a mechanical unrolling in which man appears only as a passive conductor of outside forces. By acting, as also by preaching action,

the Marxist revolutionary asserts himself as a veritable agent; he assumes himself to be free. And it is even curious to note that most Marxists of today—unlike Marx himself—feel no repugnance at the edifying dullness of moralizing speeches. They do not limit themselves to finding fault with their adversaries in the name of historical realism. When they tax them with cowardice, lying, selfishness, and venality, they very well mean to condemn them in the name of a moralism superior to history. Likewise, in the eulogies which they bestow upon each other they exalt the eternal virtues, courage, abnegation, lucidity, integrity. It may be said that all these words are used for propagandistic purposes, that it is only a matter of expedient language. But this is to admit that this language is heard, that it awakens an echo in the hearts of those to whom it is addressed. Now, neither scorn nor esteem would have any meaning if one regarded the acts of a man as a purely mechanical resultant. In order for men to become indignant or to admire, they must be conscious of their own freedom and the freedom of others. Thus, everything occurs within each man and in the collective tactics as if men were free. But then what revelation can a coherent humanism hope to oppose to the testimony which man brings to bear upon himself? So Marxists often find themselves having to confirm this belief in freedom, even if they have to reconcile it with determination as well as they can.

However, while this concession is wrested from them by the very practice of action, it is in the name of action that they attempt to condemn a philosophy of freedom. They declare authoritatively that the existence of freedom would make any concerted enterprise impossible. According to them, if the individual were not constrained by the external world to want this rather than that, there would be nothing to defend him against his whims. Here, in different language, we again meet the charge formulated by the respectful believer of supernatural imperatives. In the eyes of the Marxist, as of the Christian, it seems that to act freely is to give up justifying one's acts. This is a curious reversal of the Kantian "you must; therefore, you can." Kant postulates freedom in the name of morality. The Marxist, on the contrary, declares, "You must; therefore, you cannot." To him, a man's action seems valid only if the man has not helped set it going by an internal movement. To admit

the ontological possibility of a choice is already to betray the Cause. Does this mean that the revolutionary attitude in any way gives up being a moral attitude? It would be logical, since we observed with Hegel that it is only insofar as the choice is not realized at first that it can be set up as a moral choice. But here again Marxist thought hesitates. It sneers at idealistic ethics which do not bite into the world; but its scoffing signifies that there can be no ethics outside of action, not that action lowers itself to the level of a simple natural process. It is quite evident that the revolutionary enterprise has a human meaning. Lenin's remark, which says, in substance, "I call any action useful to the party moral action; I call it immoral if it is harmful to the party," cuts two ways. On the one hand, he refuses to accept outdated values, but he also sees in political operation a total manifestation of man as having-to-be at the same time as being. Lenin refuses to set up ethics abstractly because he means to realize it effectively. And yet a moral idea is present in the words, writings, and acts of Marxists. It is contradictory, then, to reject with horror the moment of choice which is precisely the moment when spirit passes into nature, the moment of the concrete fulfillment of man and morality.

As for us, whatever the case may be, we believe in freedom. Is it true that this belief must lead us to despair? Must we grant this curious paradox: that from the moment a man recognizes himself as free, he is prohibited from wishing for anything?

On the contrary, it appears to us that by turning toward this freedom we are going to discover a principle of action whose range will be universal. The characteristic feature of all ethics is to consider human life as a game that can be won or lost and to teach man the means of winning. Now, we have seen that the original scheme of man is ambiguous: he wants to be, and to the extent that he coincides with this wish, he fails. All the plans in which this will to be is actualized are condemned; and the ends circumscribed by these plans remain mirages. Human transcendence is vainly engulfed in those miscarried attempts. But man also wills himself to be a disclosure of being, and if he coincides with this wish, he wins, for the fact is that the world becomes present by his presence in it. But the disclosure implies a perpetual tension to keep being at a certain distance, to tear oneself from the world,

and to assert oneself as a freedom. To wish for the disclosure of the world and to assert oneself as freedom are one and the same movement. Freedom is the source from which all significations and all values spring. It is the original condition of all justification of existence. The man who seeks to justify his life must want freedom itself absolutely and above everything else. At the same time that it requires the realization of concrete ends, of particular projects, it requires itself universally. It is not a ready-made value which offers itself from the outside to my abstract adherence, but it appears (not on the plane of facility, but on the moral plane) as a cause of itself. It is necessarily summoned up by the values which it sets up and through which it sets itself up. It cannot establish a denial of itself, for in denying itself, it would deny the possibility of any foundation. To will oneself moral and to will oneself free are one and the same decision.

It seems that the Hegelian notion of "displacement" which we relied on a little while ago is now turning against us. There is ethics only if ethical action is not present. Now, Sartre declares that every man is free, that there is no way of his not being free. When he wants to escape his destiny, he is still freely fleeing it. Does not this presence of a, so to speak, natural freedom contradict the notion of ethical freedom? What meaning can there be in the words "to will oneself free," since at the beginning we *are* free? It is contradictory to set freedom up as something conquered if at first it is something given.

This objection would mean something only if freedom were a thing or a quality naturally attached to a thing. Then, in effect, one would either have it or not have it. But the fact is that it merges with the very movement of this ambiguous reality which is called existence and which *is* only by making itself be; to such an extent that it is precisely only by having to be conquered that it gives itself. To will oneself free is to effect the transition from nature to morality by establishing a genuine freedom on the original upsurge of our existence.

Every man is originally free, in the sense that he spontaneously casts himself into the world. But if we consider this spontaneity in its facticity, it appears to us only as a pure contingency, an upsurging as stupid as the clinamen of the Epicurean atom which

turned up at any moment whatsoever from any direction whatsoever. And it was quite necessary for the atom to arrive somewhere. But its movement was not justified by this result which had not been chosen. It remained absurd. Thus, human spontaneity always projects itself toward something. The psychoanalyst discovers a meaning even in abortive acts and attacks of hysteria. But in order for this meaning to justify the transcendence which discloses it, it must itself be founded, which it will never be if I do not choose to found it myself. Now, I can evade this choice. We have said that it would be contradictory deliberately to will oneself not free. But one can choose not to will himself free. In laziness, heedlessness, capriciousness, cowardice, impatience, one contests the meaning of the project at the very moment that one defines it. The spontaneity of the subject is then merely a vain living palpitation, its movement toward the object is a flight, and itself is an absence. To convert the absence into presence, to convert my flight into will, I must assume my project positively. It is not a matter of retiring into the completely inner and, moreover, abstract movement of a given spontaneity, but of adhering to the concrete and particular movement by which this spontaneity defines itself by thrusting itself toward an end. It is through this end that it sets up that my spontaneity confirms itself by reflecting upon itself. Then, by a single movement, my will, establishing the content of the act, is legitimized by it. I realize my escape toward the other as a freedom when, assuming the presence of the object, I thereby assume myself before it as a presence. But this justification requires a constant tension. My project is never founded; it founds itself. To avoid the anguish of this permanent choice, one may attempt to flee into the object itself, to engulf one's own presence in it. In the servitude of the serious, the original spontaneity strives to deny itself. It strives in vain, and meanwhile it then fails to fulfill itself as moral freedom.

We have just described only the subjective and formal aspect of this freedom. But we also ought to ask ourselves whether one can will oneself free in any matter, whatsoever it may be. It must first be observed that this will is developed in the course of time. It is in time that the goal is pursued and that freedom confirms itself. And this assumes that it is realized as a unity in the unfolding

of time. One escapes the absurdity of the clinamen only by escaping the absurdity of the pure moment. An existence would be unable to found itself if moment by moment it crumbled into nothingness. That is why no moral question presents itself to the child as long as he is still incapable of recognizing himself in the past or seeing himself in the future. It is only when the moments of his life begin to be organized into behavior that he can decide and choose. The value of the chosen end is confirmed and, reciprocally, the genuineness of the choice is manifested concretely through patience, courage, and fidelity. If I leave behind an act which I have accomplished, it becomes a thing by falling into the past. It is no longer anything but a stupid and opaque fact. In order to prevent this metamorphosis, I must ceaselessly return to it and justify it in the unity of the project in which I am engaged. Setting up the movement of my transcendence requires that I never let it uselessly fall back upon itself, that I prolong it indefinitely. Thus I cannot genuinely desire an end today without desiring it through my whole existence, insofar as it is the future of this present moment and insofar as it is the surpassed past of days to come. To will is to engage myself to persevere in my will. This does not mean that I ought not aim at any limited end. I may desire absolutely and forever a revelation of a moment. This means that the value of this provisional end will be confirmed indefinitely. But this living confirmation cannot be merely contemplative and verbal. It is carried out in an act. The goal toward which I surpass myself must appear to me as a point of departure toward a new act of surpassing. Thus, a creative freedom develops happily without ever congealing into unjustified facticity. The creator leans upon anterior creations in order to create the possibility of new creations. His present project embraces the past and places confidence in the freedom to come, a confidence which is never disappointed. It discloses being at the end of a further disclosure. At each moment freedom is confirmed through all creation.

However, man does not create the world. He succeeds in disclosing it only through the resistance which the world opposes to him. The will is defined only by raising obstacles, and by the contingency of facticity certain obstacles let themselves be conquered, and others do not. This is what Descartes expressed when

he said that the freedom of man is infinite, but his power is limited. How can the presence of these limits be reconciled with the idea of a freedom confirming itself as a unity and an indefinite movement?

In the face of an obstacle which it is impossible to overcome, stubbornness is stupid. If I persist in beating my fist against a stone wall, my freedom exhausts itself in this useless gesture without succeeding in giving itself a content. It debases itself in a vain contingency. Yet, there is hardly a sadder virtue than resignation. It transforms into phantoms and contingent reveries projects which had at the beginning been set up as will and freedom. A young man has hoped for a happy or useful or glorious life. If the man he has become looks upon these miscarried attempts of his adolescence with disillusioned indifference, there they are, forever frozen in the dead past. When an effort fails, one declares bitterly that he has lost time and wasted his powers. The failure condemns that whole part of ourselves which we had engaged in the effort. It was to escape this dilemma that the Stoics preached indifference. We could indeed assert our freedom against all constraint if we agreed to renounce the particularity of our projects. If a door refuses to open, let us accept not opening it and there we are free. But by doing that, one manages only to save an abstract notion of freedom. It is emptied of all content and all truth. The power of man ceases to be limited because it is annulled. It is the particularity of the project which determines the limitation of the power, but it is also what gives the project its content and permits it to be set up. There are people who are filled with such horror at the idea of a defeat that they keep themselves from ever doing anything. But no one would dream of considering this gloomy passivity as the triumph of freedom.

The truth is that in order for my freedom not to risk coming to grief against the obstacle which its very engagement has raised, in order that it might still pursue its movement in the face of the failure, it must, by giving itself a particular content, aim by means of it at an end which is nothing else but precisely the free movement of existence. Popular opinion is quite right in admiring a man who, having been ruined or having suffered an accident, knows how to gain the upper hand, that is, renew his engagement

in the world, thereby strongly asserting the independence of freedom in relation to things. Thus, when the sick Van Gogh calmly accepted the prospect of a future in which he would be unable to paint any more, there was no sterile resignation. For him painting was a personal way of life and of communication with others which in another form could be continued even in an asylum. The past will be integrated and freedom will be confirmed in a renunciation of this kind. It will be lived in both heartbreak and joy. In heartbreak, because the project is then robbed of its particularity—it sacrifices its flesh and blood. But in joy, since at the moment one releases his hold, he again finds his hands free and ready to stretch out toward a new future. But this act of passing beyond is conceivable only if what the content has in view is not to bar up the future, but, on the contrary, to plan new possibilities. This brings us back by another route to what we had already indicated. My freedom must not seek to trap being but to disclose it. The disclosure is the transition from being to existence. The goal which my freedom aims at is conquering existence across the always inadequate density of being.

However, such salvation is only possible if, despite obstacles and failures, a man preserves the disposal of his future, if the situation opens up more possibilities to him. In case his transcendence is cut off from his goal or there is no longer any hold on objects which might give it a valid content, his spontaneity is dissipated without founding anything. Then he may not justify his existence positively and he feels its contingency with wretched disgust. There is no more obnoxious way to punish a man than to force him to perform acts which make no sense to him, as when one empties and fills the same ditch indefinitely, when one makes soldiers who are being punished march up and down, or when one forces a schoolboy to copy lines. Revolts broke out in Italy in September, 1946, because the unemployed were set to breaking pebbles which served no purpose whatever. As is well known, this was also the weakness which ruined the national workshops in 1848. This mystification of useless effort is more intolerable than fatigue. Life imprisonment is the most horrible of punishments because it preserves existence in its pure facticity but forbids it all legitimation. A freedom cannot will itself without willing itself

as an indefinite movement. It must absolutely reject the constraints which arrest its drive toward itself. This rejection takes on a positive aspect when the constraint is natural. One rejects the illness by curing it. But it again assumes the negative aspect of revolt when the oppressor is a human freedom. One cannot deny being: the in-itself is, and negation has no hold over this being, this pure positivity; one does not escape this fullness: a destroyed house *is* a ruin; a broken chain *is* scrap iron: one attains only signification and, through it, the for-itself which is projected there; the for-itself carries nothingness in its heart and can be annihilated, whether in the very upsurge of its existence or through the world in which it exists. The prison is repudiated as such when the prisoner escapes. But revolt, insofar as it is pure negative movement, remains abstract. It is fulfilled as freedom only by returning to the positive, that is, by giving itself a content through action, escape, political struggle, revolution. Human transcendence then seeks, with the destruction of the given situation, the whole future which will flow from its victory. It resumes its indefinite rapport with itself. There are limited situations where this return to the positive is impossible, where the future is radically blocked off. Revolt can then be achieved only in the definitive rejection of the imposed situation, in suicide.

It can be seen that, on the one hand, freedom can always save itself, for it is realized as a disclosure of existence through its very failures, and it can again confirm itself by a death freely chosen. But, on the other hand, the situations which it discloses through its project toward itself do not appear as equivalents. It regards as privileged situations those which permit it to realize itself as indefinite movement; that is, it wishes to pass beyond everything which limits its power; and yet, this power is always limited. Thus, just as life is identified with the will-to-live, freedom always appears as a movement of liberation. It is only by prolonging itself through the freedom of others that it manages to surpass death itself and to realize itself as an indefinite unity. Later on we shall see what problems such a relationship raises. For the time being, it is enough for us to have established the fact that the words "to will oneself free" have a positive and concrete meaning. If man wishes to save his existence, as only he himself can do, his

original spontaneity must be raised to the height of moral freedom by taking itself as an end through the disclosure of a particular content.

But a new question is immediately raised. If man has one and only one way to save his existence, how can he choose not to choose it in all cases? How is a bad willing possible? We meet with this problem in all ethics, since it is precisely the possibility of a perverted willing which gives a meaning to the idea of virtue. We know the answer of Socrates, of Plato, of Spinoza: "No one is willfully bad." And if Good is a transcendent thing which is more or less foreign to man, one imagines that the mistake can be explained by error. But if one grants that the moral world is the world genuinely willed by man, all possibility of error is eliminated. Moreover, in Kantian ethics, which is at the origin of all ethics of autonomy, it is very difficult to account for an evil will. As the choice of his character which the subject makes is achieved in the intelligible world by a purely rational will, one cannot understand how the latter expressly rejects the law which it gives to itself. But this is because Kantism defined man as a pure positivity, and it therefore recognized no other possibility in him than coincidence with himself. We, too, define morality by this adhesion to the self; and this is why we say that man cannot positively decide between the negation and the assumption of his freedom, for as soon as he decides, he assumes it. He cannot positively will not to be free for such a willing would be self-destructive. Only, unlike Kant, we do not see man as being essentially a positive will. On the contrary, he is first defined as a negativity. He is first at a distance from himself. He can coincide with himself only by agreeing never to rejoin himself. There is within him a perpetual playing with the negative, and he thereby escapes himself, he escapes his freedom. And it is precisely because an evil will is here possible that the words "to will oneself free" have a meaning. Therefore, not only do we assert that the Existentialist doctrine permits the elaboration of an ethics, but it even appears to us as the only philosophy in which an ethics has its place. For, in a metaphysics of transcendence, in the classical sense of the term, evil is reduced to error; and in humanistic philosophies it is impossible to account for it, man being defined as complete in a complete world. Existentialism alone gives—like

religions—a real role to evil, and it is this, perhaps, which makes its judgments so gloomy. Men do not like to feel themselves in danger. Yet, it is because there are real dangers, real failures and real earthly damnation that words like victory, wisdom, or joy have meaning. Nothing is decided in advance, and it is because man has something to lose and because he can lose that he can also win.

Therefore, in the very condition of man there enters the possibility of not fulfilling this condition. In order to fulfill it, he must assume himself as a being who "makes himself a lack of being so that there might be being." But the trick of dishonesty permits stopping at any moment whatsoever. One may hesitate to make oneself a lack of being, one may withdraw before existence, or one may falsely assert oneself as being, or assert oneself as nothingness. One may realize his freedom only as an abstract independence, or, on the contrary, reject with despair the distance which separates us from being. All errors are possible since man is a negativity, and they are motivated by the anguish he feels in the face of his freedom. Concretely, men slide incoherently from one attitude to another. We shall limit ourselves to describing in their abstract form those which we have just indicated.

III

COMMUNIST-MARXIST REPLIES

III

REPLIES

GEORG LUKACS

Georg Lukacs (1885——) is the most celebrated and controversial figure in contemporary Communist philosophy, aesthetics and literary criticism. Although he grew up in Budapest, he wrote only two early works in Hungarian. After 1910 he adopted German as his literary language.

Passing over from Hegelian historicism to Marxism after the First World War, he became People's Commissar of Education during the short-lived 1919 Hungarian Communist regime. He lived in Central Europe through the 1920's and in Moscow between 1929–31 and 1933–45. Returning to Hungary after the war, he obtained a chair at the University of Budapest.

As a critic of Stalinist cultural policy preceding the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, Professor Lukacs was appointed Minister of Education in the Nagy government. Arrested by the Russians, he was interned in Romania and allowed to return to Hungary in 1957, where he continues to write his scholarly works.

Lukacs has published more than thirty books and fifty essays. He has a world reputation for the exceptional quality and broad range of his literary criticism. Thomas Mann, who regarded Lukacs as the most brilliant of his critics, portrayed him as Naptha in *The Magic Mountain.*

His writings on literary subjects include *Theory of the Novel* (1920), *The Historical Novel* (1937), *Goethe and His Time* (1947), *Thomas Mann* (1949), *Studies in European Realism* (1950), and *Realism in Our Time* (1964). His two most influential theoretical works have been *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) and *The Young Hegel* (1948). His long-heralded 1,700-page treatise on *Aesthetics* appeared in 1963.

The polemical study entitled *Existentialism or Marxism?*

(1947), from which this key excerpt is reproduced, immediately became a focal point in the first stage of the controversy between the two schools of thought. Lukacs characterized Existentialism as the supreme effort by bourgeois ideologists, caught in the contradictions of the imperialist epoch, to find a "third way" in philosophy apart from objective idealism and dialectical materialism.

EXISTENTIALISM OR MARXISM?

Tout se passe comme si le monde, l'homme et l'homme dans le monde n'arrivaient à réaliser qu'un Dieu manqué.

—Sartre, *L'Être et le néant*

There is no reasonable doubt that Existentialism will soon become the predominant philosophical current among bourgeois intellectuals. This state of affairs has been long in the making. Ever since the publication of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* the *avant-garde* intellectuals have seen in Existentialism the philosophy of our times. In Germany, Jaspers undertook to communicate the principles of the new philosophy to broader sections of the educated public. During the war and since its end, the tide of Existentialism rolled over the entire Western cultural field, and the leading German Existentialists and their precursor, Husserl, have made great conquests in France and in America—not only in the United States but in Latin America as well. In 1943 the basic work of Western Existentialism appeared, Sartre's big book cited above; and since then Existentialism has been pressing forward irresistibly, through philosophical debates, special periodicals (*Les Temps modernes*), novels, and dramas.

1. Method as Attitude

Is all this a passing fad—perhaps one which may last a few years? Or is it really an epoch-making new philosophy? The answer depends on how accurately the new philosophy reflects reality, and how adequately it deals with the crucial human question with which the age is faced.

An epoch-making philosophy has never yet arisen without a really original method. This was so for all the great philosophers of the past, Plato and Aristotle, Descartes and Spinoza, Kant and Hegel. What is the originality of Existentialism's method? The question is not settled by referring to the fact that Existentialism is an offshoot of Husserl's philosophy. It is important to note that modern phenomenology is one of the numerous philosophical methods which seek to rise above both idealism and materialism by discovering a philosophical "third way," by making intuition the true source of knowledge. From Nietzsche through Mach and Avenarius to Bergson and beyond, the mass of bourgeois philosophy goes this way. Husserl's intuition of essence (*Wesensschau*) is but one strand of the development.

This would not in itself be a decisive argument against the phenomenological method. If we are to arrive at a correct judgment, we must first understand the philosophical and topical significance of the "third way," as well as the place and function of intuition in the knowing process.

Is there any room for a "third way" besides idealism and materialism? If we consider this question seriously, as the great philosophers of the past did, and not with fashionable phrases, there can be only one answer, "No." For when we look at the relations which can exist between being and consciousness we see clearly that only two positions are possible: either being is primary (materialism), or consciousness is primary (idealism). Or, to put it another way, the fundamental principle of materialism is the independence of being from consciousness; of idealism, the dependence of being on consciousness. The fashionable philosophers of today establish a correlation between being and consciousness as a basis for their

"third way": there is no being without consciousness and no consciousness without being. But the first assertion produces only a variant of idealism: the acknowledgment of the dependence of being on consciousness.

It was the grim reality of the imperialist period that forced the philosophical "third way" on bourgeois thinking: for only in becalmed, untroubled times can men hold themselves to be thoroughgoing idealists. When some students broke Fichte's windows over a college quarrel, Goethe said, smiling: "This is a very disagreeable way to take cognizance of the reality of the external world." The imperialist epoch gave us such window-breaking on a worldwide scale. Downright philosophical idealism gently faded out. Apart from some minor professorial philosophers, anyone who declares himself an idealist today feels hopeless about applying his philosophy to reality (Valery, Benda, etc.).

The abandonment of the old downright idealism had been anticipated even in the middle of the last century by petty-bourgeois asceticism. Ever since Nietzsche, the body (*Leib*) has played a leading role in bourgeois philosophy. The new philosophy needs formulas which recognize the primary reality of the body and the joys and dangers of bodily existence, without, however, making any concessions to materialism. For at the same time materialism was becoming the world view of the revolutionary proletariat. That made a position such as Gassendi and Hobbes took impossible for bourgeois thinkers. Although the method of idealism had been discredited by the realities of the time, its conclusions were held indispensable. This explains the need for the "third way" in the bourgeois world of the imperialist period.

The phenomenological method, especially after Husserl, believes it has discovered a way of knowing which exhibits the essence of objective reality without going beyond the human or even the individual consciousness. The intuition of essence is a sort of intuitive introspection, but is not psychologically oriented. It inquires rather what sort of objects the thought process posits, and what kind of intentional acts are involved. It was still relatively easy for Husserl to operate with these concepts, because he was concerned exclusively with questions of pure logic, i.e., pure acts and objects of thought. The question became more complex as Scheler took up

problems of ethics and sociology, and Heidegger and Sartre broached the ultimate questions of philosophy. The need of the times which drove them in this direction was so compelling that it silenced all gnosiological doubts as to whether the method was adequate to objective reality.

Even when the phenomenologists dealt with crucial questions of social actuality, they put off the theory of knowledge and asserted that the phenomenological method suspends or "brackets" the question whether the intentional objects are real. The method was thus freed from any knowledge of reality. Once during the First World War Scheler visited me in Heidelberg, and we had an informing conversation on this subject. Scheler maintained that phenomenology was a universal method which could have anything for its intentional object. For example, he explained, phenomenological researches could be made about the devil; only the question of the devil's reality would first have to be "bracketed." "Certainly," I answered, "and when you are finished with the phenomenological picture of the devil, you open the brackets—and the devil in person is standing before you." Scheler laughed, shrugged his shoulders, and made no reply.

The arbitrariness of the method is seen especially when the question is raised: Is what phenomenological intuition finds actually real? What right does that intuition have to speak of the reality of its object? For Dilthey's intuition, the colorfulness and the uniqueness of historical situations are the reality; for Bergson's, it is the flow itself, the duration (*durée*), that dissolves the petrified forms of ordinary life; while for Husserl's, the acts in which individual objects are meant constitute "reality"—objects which he treats as isolated units, with hard contours like statuary. Although mutually exclusive, these intuitions were able to dwell together in relative peace.

These interpretations of reality stem from factors even more concrete than the social need for a "third way." It is a general tendency of the imperialist period to regard social relationships as secondary circumstances which do not concern the essence of man. The intuition of essence takes the immediate givenness of inner experience as its starting point, which it regards as unconditioned and primary, never looking into its character and preconditions,

and proceeds thence to its final abstract "vision," divorced from reality. Such intuitions, under the social conditions of the time, could easily abstract from all social actuality while keeping the appearance of utter objectivity and rigor. In this way there arose the logical myth of a world (in splendid accord with the attitude of bourgeois intellectuals) independent of consciousness, although its structure and characteristics are said to be determined by the individual consciousness.

It is impossible here to give a detailed critique of the phenomenological method. We shall therefore merely analyze in summary fashion an example of the way it is applied. We have chosen the book of Szilasi, the well known student of Husserl and Heidegger, partly because Szilasi is an earnest thinker who aims at scientific objectivity, not a cynical fabricator of myths like Scheler; and partly because the elementary form of the example is well suited to a brief treatment. Szilasi takes as his instance the co-presence (*Miteinandersein*) at his lecture of his hearers and himself. Describing the essence of the situation, he finds that the hall lies before him, the benches, in a word, the external world: "This space with its variously worked boards is a lecture hall only because we understand this mass of wooden objects as such, and we do understand it so because from the outset we mean it as something presupposed in our common task—namely, lecturing and listening." From which he concludes, "It is the way of being together that determines what the thing is."

Let us consider the result of this intuition of essence from the methodological point of view. First, it is a primitive abstraction when Szilasi speaks of "variously worked boards," and not of desks, benches, etc. But this is methodologically essential, for if he should concede that the lecture hall is equally adapted to holding philological, legal, and other lectures, what would be left of the magical potency of the intentional experience, which is supposed to make the object what it is?

However, what the analysis omits is still more important. The hall is in Zurich, and the time is the 1940's. The fact that Szilasi could deliver a lecture precisely in Zurich has the most diverse social preconditions. For instance, before Hitler's seizure of power Szilasi gave his lectures in Freiburg; after 1933 they were no longer

permitted, in fact the lecturer had to leave Germany because his personal safety was threatened. Why is all this missing from the intuition of co-presence? It belongs there at least as much as do the "worked boards."

But let us return to the boards. The fact that boards are used in a certain way to make desks and benches presupposes a certain stage of development of industry and of society. Again, the fact that the boards and the hall as a whole are in a certain condition (is there coal for heating, or glass in the windows?) is inseparably connected with other social events and structures. But phenomenological method, excluding all social elements from its analysis, confronts consciousness with a chaos of things (and men) which only individual subjectivity can articulate and objectify. Here we have the well publicized phenomenological objectivity, the "third way," which turns out to be only a revival of Neo-Kantianism.

Phenomenology and the ontology deriving from it only *seem* to go beyond the gnosiological solipsism of subjective idealism. A formally new formulation of the question reinstates ontological idealism. It is no accident that (just as forty years ago the Machists reproached one another for idealism, each recognizing only himself as the discoverer of the philosophical "third way") today the Existentialists make similar accusations against one another. So Sartre complains of Husserl and Heidegger, two men he otherwise prizes highly. Husserl, in his opinion, has not gone beyond Kant; and he criticizes Heidegger as follows: "The character being-together [co-presence, *Mitsein*] introduced by Heidegger is a character of the isolated ego. Hence it does not lead beyond solipsism. Therefore we shall search *Sein und Zeit* in vain for a position beyond both idealism and realism [meaning materialism]." An analysis of Sartre's philosophy will show us that he can be taxed with the offense for which he condemns Husserl and Heidegger. In Heidegger's philosophy existence (*Dasein*) does not mean objective being (*Sein*) proper, but human existence, i.e., a being aware of existence. In some places Sartre, who has more interest than his predecessors in the emotional and practical relation of man to nature, spells out the complete dependence of nature on man's consciousness. When speaking of devastation, he denies that it exists in nature itself, in which only changes take place. "And even this expression is inade-

quate, for in order that this changing-to-something-else may be posited, a witness is needed who somehow or other preserves the past within himself and is able to compare it with the present in its 'no-longer' form." And in another place he says: "The full moon does not denote the future, except when we observe the waxing moon in the 'world' which reveals itself in human actuality: the future comes into the world by way of human existence."

This purely idealistic tendency is heightened in Sartre by the fact that his way of handling problems compels him to study concrete questions of coexistence (*Mitsein*) even more frequently than Heidegger. He meets the difficulty partly by choosing loosely connected manifestations of co-presence that can be referred with some plausibility to the inner experiences of the ego (a rendezvous at a café, a trip in the subway). But when actual social activity is involved (labor, class consciousness), he makes a methodological *salto mortale* and declares that the experiences of the relevant intuitions of essence are of psychological and not of ontological character. The reason for this is the secret of the initiate, those to whom the intuition of essence is granted. It is therefore no accident that, when Sartre tests the relation of man to his fellowman, he recognizes only the following relations as ontologically essential, that is, as elements of reality in itself: love, speech, masochism, indifference, longing, hate, and sadism. (Even the order of the categories is Sartre's.) Anything beyond this in *Miteinandersein,* the categories of collective life together, of working together, of fighting in a common cause, is for Sartre, as we have seen, a category of consciousness (psychological) and not a really existent category (ontological).

When all this is applied to actual cases, the result is banal Philistine commonplaces. In his popular book Sartre takes up the question of how far he can have confidence in his freely acting comrades. Answer: "As far as I have immediate personal knowledge of them, to count on the unity and will of the party is just like counting on the streetcar to come on time, and on the train not to jump the tracks. But I cannot count on men that I do not know, banking on human goodness or man's interest in the common good, for it is a given datum that man is free and there is no such thing as a human nature on which I can count." Apart from the

involved terminology, any petty bourgeois, shrinking from public affairs, could, and does, say as much.

2. *The Myth of Nothingness*

Il est absurde que nous sommes nés, il est absurde que nous mourrons.

Sartre, *L'Être et le néant*

It would be an error to assume that such an abstract narrowing of reality, such an idealist distortion of the problem of reality, by intelligent and experienced men is intentional deceit. On the contrary, those inner experiences which constitute the attitude revealed in the intuition of the *Wesensschau,* and its content, are as sincere and spontaneous as possible. But that does not make them objectively correct. Indeed this spontaneity, by betraying its immediate uncritical attitude toward the basic phenomenon, creates the false consciousness: fetishism. Fetishism signifies, in brief, that the relations among human beings which function by means of objects are reflected in human consciousness immediately as things, because of the structure of capitalist economy. They become objects or things, fetishes in which men crystallize their social relationships, as savages do their relationships to nature; and for savages the laws of natural relations are just as impenetrable as the laws of the capitalist system of economy are to the men of the world of today. Like savages, modern men pray to the fetishes they themselves have made, bow down to them, and sacrifice to them (e.g., the fetish of money). Human relations, as Marx says, acquire "a spectral objectivity." The social existence of man becomes a riddle in his immediate experience, even though objectively he is a social being first and foremost, despite all immediate appearances to the contrary.

It is not our aim or our task to treat of the problem of fetish-making: to do so would require a systematic development of the whole structure of capitalist society and the forms of false con-

sciousness arising out of it. I shall merely point out the most important questions which have had decisive influence on the development of Existentialism.

The first is life's losing its meaning. Man loses the center, weight, and connectedness of his own life, a fact life itself compels him to realize. The phenomenon has been known for a long time. Ibsen, in *Peer Gynt,* puts it into a striking little scene. The aging Peer Gynt is peeling off the layers of an onion, and playfully compares the single layers with the periods of his life, hoping at the end to come to the core of the onion and the core of his own personality. But layer follows layer, period after period of life; and no core is found.

Every one whom this experience has touched faces the question: How can my life become meaningful? The man who lives in the fetish-making world does not see that every life is rich, full, and meaningful to the extent that it is consciously linked in human relations with other lives. The isolated egoistic man who lives only for himself lives in an impoverished world. His experiences approach threateningly close to the unessential and begin to merge into nothingness the more exclusively they are his alone, and turned solely inward.

The man of the fetishized world, who can cure his disgust with the world only in intoxication, seeks, like the morphine addict, to find a way out by heightening the intensity of the intoxicant rather than by a way of life that has no need of intoxication. He is not aware that the loss of communal life, the degradation and dehumanization of collective work as a result of capitalist division of labor, and the severance of human relations from social activity have stupefied him. He does not see this, and goes further and further along the fatal path, which tends to become a subjective need. For in capitalist society public life, work, and the system of human relations are under the spell of fetish-making, reification and dehumanization. Only revolt against the actual foundations, as we can see in many authors of the time, leads to a clearer appreciation of these foundations, and thence to a new social perspective. Escape into inwardness is a tragicomical blind alley.

As long as the pillars of capitalist society seemed unshakable, say up to the First World War, the so-called *avant-garde* danced with the fetishes of their inner life. Some writers, it is true, saw the

approach of the inevitable catastrophe (Ibsen, Tolstoy, Thomas Mann, etc.). The gaudy carnival, often with a ghastly tone from tragic incidental music, went on uninterrupted. The philosophy of Simmel and Bergson and much of the literature of the time show exactly where things were heading.

Many a good writer and keen thinker saw through the intoxication of carnival to the fact that the fetishized ego had lost its essence. But they went no further than to sketch tragic or tragicomic perspectives behind the garish whirl. The fetishized bases of life seemed so beyond question that they escaped study, let alone criticism. If there were doubts, they were like the doubt of the Hindu who questioned the accepted doctrine that the world rests on a huge elephant; he asked modestly on what the elephant rested; and when told it rested on a huge tortoise, he went his way contented. Mind was so formed by fetish thinking that when the First World War and the subsequent series of crises called the very possibility of human existence into question, giving a new tinge to every idea, and when the carnival of isolated individualism gave way to its Ash Wednesday, there was still virtually no change in the way that philosophical questions were asked.

Yet the aim and direction of the quest for essence did change. The Existentialism of Heidegger and Jaspers is proof. The experience which underlies this philosophy is easily stated: man stands face to face with nothingness or nonbeing. The fundamental relation of man to the world is the situation of *vis-à-vis de rien*. There is nothing particularly original in this. Ever since Poe, perhaps the first to describe the situation and the corresponding attitude, modern literature has dwelt upon the tragic fate which drives a man to the edge of the abyss. As examples we may mention the situation of Raskolnikov after the murder, and the road to suicide of Svidrigaïlov or Stavrogin. What is involved here? A characteristic tragic form of development, arising out of present-day life. A great writer weaves these tragic destinies, which are as vivid and positive as were the tragedies of Oedipus and Hamlet in their day.

The originality of Heidegger is that he takes just such situations as typical and makes them his starting point. With the help of the complicated method of phenomenology, he lodges the entire problem in the fetishized structure of the bourgeois mind, in the dreary,

hopeless nihilism and pessimism of the intellectuals of the interval between the two world wars. The first fetish is the concept of nothingness. In Heidegger as in Sartre, this is the central problem of reality, of ontology. In Heidegger nothingness is an ontological datum on a level with existence; in Sartre it is only one factor in existence, which nevertheless enters into all the manifestations of being.

A very specialized philosophical dissertation would be required to show the chains of thought, sometimes quite false, sometimes obviously sophistical, by which Sartre seeks to justify his theory of negative judgment. It is true that, for every "No" which expresses a particular judgment, there is a positively existing situation. But it is only idolizing of subjective attitudes that gives nothingness the semblance of reality. When I inquire, for instance, what the laws of the solar system are, I have not posited any negative being, such as Sartre envisages. The meaning of my question is simply that I lack knowledge. The answer may be put in either positive or negative form, but the same positive reality is indicated in either case. Only sophistry could infer the "existence" of nonbeing. The nothingness which fascinates recent philosophers is a myth of declining capitalist society. While previously it was individuals (though socially typical ones) like Stavrogin and Svidrigaïlov that had to face nothingness, today it is a whole system that has reached this chimerical outlook. For Heidegger and Sartre life itself is the state of being cast into nothingness.

Existentialism consistently proclaims that nothing can be known by man. It does not challenge science in general; it does not raise skeptical objections to its practical or technical uses. It merely denies that there is a science which has the right to say anything about the one essential question: the relation of the individual to life. This is the alleged superiority of Existentialism to the old philosophy. "Existential philosophy," Jaspers says, *"would be lost immediately if it started believing again that it knew what man is."* This radical ignorance on principle, which is stressed by Heidegger and Sartre, is one of the main reasons for the overwhelming influence of Existentialism. Men who have no prospects themselves find consolation in the doctrine that life in general has no prospects to offer.

Here Existentialism flows into the modern current of irrationalism. The phenomenological and ontological method seems, it is true, to stand in bold contrast to the ordinary irrationalist tendencies. Are not the former "rigorously scientific," and was not Husserl a supporter of the most fanatical of logicians, Bolzano and Brentano? But even a superficial study of the method at once discloses its links with the masters of irrationalism, Dilthey and Bergson. And when Heidegger renewed Kierkegaard's efforts, the tie became even closer.

This connection is more than an accidental convergence of two methods. The more phenomenology is transformed into the method of Existentialism, the more the underlying irrationality of the individual and of being becomes the central object, and the closer becomes its affinity to irrational currents of the time. Being is meaningless, uncaused, unnecessary. Being is by definition "the originally fortuitous," says Sartre. If nothingness comes to "exist" by the magic of Existentialism, existence is made negative. Existence is what man lacks. The human being, says Heidegger, "knows what he is only from 'existence,' i.e., from his own potentialities," whether he becomes the one he "is," or not. Is man's becoming authentic or not? We have seen that in the leading trends of modern philosophy this question has an antisocial character. Using the familiar method, Heidegger subjects man's everyday life to phenomenological analysis. The life of man is a coexistence and at the same time a being-in-the-world. This being also has its fetish; namely, "one." In German, subjectless sentences begin with *man* ("one"): "One writes," "One does." Heidegger, making myths, erects this word into an ontological existent in order to express philosophically what seems to him to be the function of society and social life; viz., to turn man away from himself, to make him unauthentic, to prevent him from being himself. The manifestation of "one" in daily life is chatter, curiosity, ambiguity, "falling." To follow the path of one's own existence, according to Heidegger, one must take the road to death, his own death; one must live in such a way that his death does not come upon him as a brute fact breaking in on him from without, but as his own. Actual existence can find its crowning achievement only in such a personal demise. The complete capriciousness and subjectivism of the ontology, con-

men, to say "No" to fascism. The less specific the "No" was, the better it expressed the feeling of actuality. The abstract "No" and its pendant, abstract freedom, were to many men the exact expression of the "myth" of the resistance. We shall see that Sartre's notion of freedom is most abstract. This enables us to understand why the sense of the time exalted Existentialism and yielded to it as adequate philosophy of the day.

However, fascism collapsed, and the construction and reenforcement of democracy and free life engaged the public opinion of every country as its first concern. Every serious argument, from politics to Weltanschauung, revolves now around the question of what the democracy and freedom should be which mankind is building on the ruins of fascist destruction.

Existentialism has kept its popularity under these changed circumstances; indeed, it would seem that it is now for the first time—to be sure, in Sartre's formulation, not Heidegger's—on the road to world conquest. One decisive factor here is the fact that Existentialism gives the notion of freedom a central place in its philosophy. But today freedom is no longer a myth. The strivings for freedom have become concrete, more and more concrete every day. Violent disputes over the interpretation of freedom and democracy have split the supporters of the various schools into antagonistic camps. Under such circumstances, how is it possible that Existentialism, with its rigid, abstract conception of freedom, should become a worldwide trend? Or more precisely, to whom, and how, does Existentialism carry conviction as a philosophy of freedom? To answer this central question, we must come to closer grips with Sartre's concept of freedom.

According to him, freedom is a basic fact of human existence. We represent, says Sartre, "freedom which chooses, but we could not choose to be free. We are doomed to freedom." We are thrown into freedom (Heidegger's *Geworfenheit*).

Not choosing, however, is just as much choice as choosing is; avoiding action is action, too. Everywhere Sartre stresses this role of freedom, from the most primitive facts of everyday life to the ultimate questions of metaphysics. When I take part in a group excursion, get tired, am weighed down by my pack, and so forth, I am faced with the fact of free choice, and must decide whether I

will go on with my companions or throw off my burden and sit down by the roadside. From this problem the way leads to the final, most abstract problems of human existence; in the plans or projects in which man concretizes his free decision and free choice (*projet, projeter* is one of the most important notions of Sartre's theory of freedom) there lies the content of the ultimate ideal, the last "project": God. In Sartre's words: "The basic plan of human reality is best illustrated by the fact that man is the being whose plan it is to become God. . . . Being a man is equivalent to being engaged in becoming God." And the philosophical content of this ideal of God is the attainment of that stage of existence which the old philosophy denoted as *causa sui*.

Sartre's notion of freedom is extremely broad and indeterminate, lacking specific criteria. Choice, the essence of freedom, consists for him in the act of choosing oneself. The constant danger lurking here is that we could become other than we are. And here there is no moral content or moral form which could act as compass or plumb line. For instance, cowardice stems from free choice just as much as courage does. "My fear is free and attests my freedom; I have cast all my freedom into my fear and chosen myself as cowardly in such and such circumstances; in other circumstances I might exist as courageous and put my freedom into courage. With respect to freedom, no ideal has any precedence."

Since for Sartre all human existence is free by definition, his notion of freedom is even more indefinite than that of Heidegger. Heidegger could differentiate between the free and the unfree. For him, that man is free who programmatically lives toward his own death; unfree and unauthentic, he who, forgetting his own death, lives not as a self but in the crowd. Sartre rejects this criterion, as we have seen. He also rejects such a hierarchy of moral values as Scheler had conceived, as well as any connection of free choice with man's past, viz., the principle of continuity and consistency of personality. Finally, he denies the Kantian formal distinction between free and unfree acts.

He seems, it is true, to be somewhat frightened by this indeterminateness. In his popular pamphlet he says, "Nothing can be good for us which is not good for everyone," and in another place: "At the same time that I will my own freedom it is my duty to will the

cealed behind a show of objectivity, come to light once more. As a confession of a citizen of the 1920's, Heidegger's way of thinking is not without interest. *Sein und Zeit* is at least as absorbing reading as Céline's novel, *Voyage au bout de la nuit*. But the former, like the latter, is merely a document of the day showing how a class felt and thought, and not an "ontological" disclosure of ultimate truth. It is only because this book is so well suited to the emotional world of today's intellectuals that the arbitrariness of its pseudo-argumentation is not exposed. The contrast of abstract death to meaningless life is for many men today an implicit axiom. But it suffices to glance at the mode of thought of older times, before collapse started, to realize that this attitude toward death is not the ontological character of "being" but a transitory phenomenon. Spinoza said: "The free man thinks of anything but his death; his wisdom is not death but pondering on life."

Jaspers and Sartre are less radical than Heidegger in this respect, although their thought is not the less conditioned by time and class. Sartre flatly rejects the concept of specific or personal death as a category of Existentialism. In Jaspers, the phantom of "one" does not appear formally in such a radically mystifying form, but only as the totality of the nameless powers ruling life (that is, essentially, social life once more objectivized in a fetish). He contents himself with assigning man, once he has acquired his essence and begun to live his own private existence, strictly to the paths of private life. In Geneva recently Jaspers developed the thesis that nothing good or essential can come of political or social activity: the salvation of man is possible only when every one passionately concerns himself exclusively with his own existence and in relations with other individuals of like persuasion.

Here the labors of the philosophical mountain have only produced a dreary Philistine mouse. Ernst Bloch, the well-known German antifascist writer (whose book appeared in 1935), said of Heidegger's death theory (from which Jaspers' personal morality is obtained simply by the addition of water): Taking eternal death as goal makes man's existing social situation a matter of such indifference that it might as well remain capitalistic. The assertion of death as absolute fate and sole destination has the same significance for today's counterrevolution as formerly the consolation of

the hereafter had. This keen observation casts light too on the reason why the popularity of Existentialism is growing not only among snobs but also among reactionary writers.

3. Freedom in a Fetishized World and the Fetish of Freedom

Je construis l'universel en me choisissant.

—Sartre, *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme.*

Existentialism is the philosophy not only of death but also of abstract freedom. This is the most important reason for the popularity of Sartre's forms of Existentialism; and—although it may sound paradoxical—the reactionary side of Existentialism's present influence is here concealed. Heidegger, as we know, saw the way to existence's becoming essential and real only in a life directed toward death; Sartre's shrewd comments put an end to the specious probativeness of Heidegger's exposition. This contradiction between Sartre and Heidegger is an expression not merely of the divergent attitudes of French and German intellectuals toward the central problems of life, but also of the changed times. Heidegger's basic book appeared in 1927, on the eve of the new world crisis, in the oppressed murky atmosphere before the fascist storm; and the effect Bloch described was the general state of intellectuals. We do not know when Sartre's book appeared; the nominal date is 1943—that is, when liberation from fascism was already in sight and when, just because of the decade-long rule of fascism, the longing for freedom was the deepest feeling of the intellectuals of all Europe, especially of countries where they had grown up in democratic traditions. The inner experience—above all, in the Western countries—was one of freedom in general, abstractly, without analysis or differentiation, in brief, freedom as myth, which precisely because of its formlessness was able to unite under its flag all enemies of fascism, who (whatever their point of view) hated their origin or their goal. Only one thing mattered to these

freedom of others. I cannot set my own freedom as goal unless I also set that of others as my goal." This sounds very fine. But in Sartre it is only an eclectic insertion into Existentialism of the moral principles of the Enlightenment and the Kantian philosophy. Kant did not succeed in establishing objective morality by generalizing subjectivity. The young Hegel, in a sharp critique, showed this failure. However, Kant's generalization still stands in intimate connection with the first principles of his social philosophy; in Sartre, this generalization is an eclectic compromise with traditional philosophical opinion, contradicting his ontological position.

In his capital work he does not make these concessions. True to his basic thought, ontological solipsism, the content and goal of the free act are meaningful and explicable only from the point of view of the subject. Here Sartre still states a view opposite to that of his popular brochure: "Respect for the freedom of one's fellowman is idle chatter: even if we could so plan that we honored this freedom, such an attitude would be a violation of the freedom which we were so busy respecting." In the same place he illustrates this conception by a very concrete example: "When I bring about tolerance among my fellowmen, I have forcibly hurled them into a tolerant world. In so doing I have in principle taken away their free capacity for courageous resistance, for perseverance, for self-testing, which they would have had the opportunity of developing in some world of intolerance."

This cynical view that there are no unfree acts has significant resemblance to the view that there are no free acts. While even Heidegger knew that we can speak of a free act only if man is capable of being coerced as well, Sartre does not know this. Like the determinist, Sartre reduces human phenomena to one level. But determinism is at least a system, verifiable in part, whereas Sartre's free acts are a disconnected, fortuitous conglomeration.

What is the legitimate factor in Sartre? Without question, the emphasis on the individual's decision, whose importance was undervalued alike by bourgeois determinism and by vulgar Marxism. All social activity is made up of the actions of individuals, and no matter how decisive the economic basis may be in these decisions, its effects are felt only "in the long run," as Engels so often stresses. This means that there is always a concrete area of free choice for

the individual, which does not conflict with the fact that history has its general and necessary trends of development. The mere existence of political parties proves the reality of this area. The main directions of development can be foreseen; but, as Engels stressed, it would be idle pedantry to try to foretell from the laws of evolution whether in a given case Peter or Paul will individually decide this way or that, vote for this party or the other, and so forth. The necessity of evolution is always effected by means of internal and external contingencies. It would be a service to science to show their significance and study their place and role, if at the same time their methodological meaning in the whole dialectical process were more precisely determined than formerly. In this sense a role which should not be underestimated attaches to moral problems and questions of freedom and individual decision in the total dialectical knowledge of social development.

Sartre, to be sure, does exactly the opposite. We have seen that, as has been fashionable for decades, he denies necessary development and even development itself. Even in the case of individuals he divorces decision situations from the past. He denies any genuine connection of the individual with society. He construes the individual's world as completely different from that of his fellowmen. The notion of freedom thus obtained is fatalistic and strained in a mechanical way; it thus loses all meaning. If we look at it a little more closely, it has virtually no connection with the actual moral concept of freedom. It says no more than what Engels said in an occasional remark; namely, that there is no human activity in which individual consciousness could not play a part.

Obviously Sartre himself sees the difficulty of his notion of freedom. But he remains faithful to his method, and busies himself with balancing one overstrained and meaningless conception against another: freedom against responsibility, the latter being for Sartre just as universal and unconditionally valid as the concept of freedom. "If I choose to join the army instead of to die or suffer dishonor, that is equivalent to taking the entire responsibility for this war."

Here again the formal-logical overstraining of a relative truth-factor leads to the theoretical and practical annihilation of the concept in question. For so rigid a formulation of responsibility is

identical with complete irresponsibility. We did not need to be politicians or Marxists to see that. A master of the "psychology of depths," Dostoyevsky often said that extreme rigid forcing of moral principles and moral decisions generally has no influence on men's actions. They sweep overhead, and the men who act on them have weaker moral guidance than would be the case if they had no principles at all. In the shadow of the rigorous pitiless feeling of responsibility, extending to the point of suicide, it is easy to commit one villainy after another with frivolous cynicism.

Sartre sees something of all this, but without drawing any conclusions from it. So he weaves fetishes and myths around the problem he vaguely discerns, and concludes with the trivial phrase: "Anyone who in anguish" (*angoisse* has been a decisive category of Existentialism since the Kierkegaardian Reception) "realizes that his condition of life is that of being thrown into a responsibility which leads to complete isolation: that man knows no more remorse, regret, or self-justification." Just as the sublime is but a step from the ridiculous, so a certain kind of moral sublimity is only a step from frivolity and cynicism.

It was necessary for us to elaborate thus sharply on the bankruptcy of the Sartrean concept of freedom because this is precisely the key to the widespread effectiveness of the doctrine in certain circles. Such an abstract, forced, totally vacuous and irrationalized conception of freedom and responsibility, the haughty scorn for social viewpoints and public life used to defend the ontological integrity of the individual—all adequately rounds out the myth of nothingness, especially for the requirements of snobs: for they must be particularly impressed with the mixture of cruelly strict principle with cynical looseness of action and moral nihilism. But in addition this conception of freedom gives a certain section of intellectuals, always inclined toward extreme individualism, an ideological support and justification for refusing the unfolding and building of democracy. There have been writers who, calling themselves democrats, undertook to defend the rights of the black market and of the sabotaging and swindling capitalist, all in the name of individual freedom, and who carried the principle so far that room is found for the freedom of reaction and fascism; responsibility has been the slogan in whose name the attempt was first

made to block the registration of the new owners' land and later to call for their return. Sartre's abstract and strained conception of freedom and responsibility was just what these forces could use.

Sartre's books do not give us the impression that he exactly desires to be the ideologist of these groups; and certainly there are genuine and sincere democrats among his French supporters. But large-scale fashions pay little heed to the internal intentions of their authors. The various currents of society have their own ideological requirements, and say with Molière, "Je prends mon bien où je le trouve." So, not only snobbishness but reaction, too, manages to cook its broth at the fire of Existentialism. This is one more reason for us to point out that the acquisition of Existentialism is no Promethean deed, no theft of celestial fire, but rather the commonplace action of using the lighted cigarette of a chance passerby to light one's own.

ROGER GARAUDY

Roger Garaudy (1913——) is the leading ideological spokesman for the French Communist party, a member of its Central Committee, a former member of the French National Assembly and now a senator from the Seine district. He is a Professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne and director of the Center for Marxist Studies and Research.

His theoretical and historical works include *The French Sources of Scientific Socialism* (1948), *The Materialist Theory of Knowledge* (1953), *Perspectives of Man* (1959), and *Marxist Humanism* (1957).

This selection is the first of a group of vehement essays from *Literature of the Graveyard* (1948) on Sartre, François Mauriac, Malraux and Koestler—the most prominent critics or opponents of the Communists among the novelists of postwar France.

According to Garaudy, skepticism, despair and escapism made these writers tools of reaction—"the trait they have in common is panic in the face of the real and, at the same time, the profound desire not to change anything." He also upbraided them for failing to conform to the dictates of "socialist realism" in their choice of characters and treatment of themes. At that time he did not separate Sartre from the intransigently anti-Communist intellectuals.

Introduction

"We have given you, Adam . . ."

For four centuries now, morality as well as political power has, for many men, ceased to exist "by divine right." If man no longer

has as a guide to his action the will of God, revealed in a Book and interpreted by an infallible Church, he must himself look for the rules of his conduct, with his own ends and means.

As early as the Renaissance, Pico della Mirandola posed this problem in his *Treatise on the Greatness of Man*. And he imagined nature addressing man in the following words:

"We have given you, Adam, neither a definite dwelling nor a specific face nor a special function, so that you may choose the dwelling, face, and function that you wish. We have placed you in the center of the world, in order that you may more easily look all around you in the world; we have made of you neither a celestial being nor an earthbound being, neither an immortal nor a mortal, so that you yourself may mold and shape like a sculptor the form you prefer to give yourself. You can plunge into the lower ranks of brutes or lift yourself into the higher ranks of divine beings."

As for us, we realize more and more clearly that, in the words of Marx, "men make their own history." Hence every philosophy that is not subordinated to religion begins necessarily with a meditation on freedom. The French Revolution of 1789 was the first attempt at a practical solution of this problem.

With the Revolution, this philosophy of freedom, by taking hold of the masses of the people, became a fighting and effective philosophy. And since then, this problem of freedom has become the center of all our political and philosophical debates. That is the guiding thread I have chosen for my criticism; for it is this problem which delimits present-day philosophical positions.

FALSE PROPHET: JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Sartre poses the problem exactly as I have just posed it, and as it is posed to all those for whom God is no more. He recalls the phrase uttered by Kirilov in Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed*: "If God did not exist, everything would be allowed." And Sartre adds:

"That is the point of departure of Existentialism." Thus, Sartre's meditation on freedom begins with the nihilist postulate. Either God surrounds me and commands me, or I am in the void. Either man is in God or man is in the void. Sartre chooses man in the void.

"Our point of departure is the subjectivity of the history of the individual," he asserts, invoking the name of Descartes. And he erects a philosophy of the *tabula rasa*.[1]

"Men make their own history," said Marx, but he added: "but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past." [2]

That is where our disagreement with Existentialism begins.

Thought, when it is cut off from action, is sick. This sickness is sometimes called mythology, mysticism, idealism. Today it is called Existentialism.

For it is indeed a sickness. Roquentin explains his "nausea" to us in the novel of the same name: "Objects begin to exist in your hand." We doubt whether a machinist thus suddenly discovers the existence of his tools. Roquentin's point of view is that of the sick persons described by Dr. Pierre Janet. The latter shows how they have lost "the function of the real": basing themselves on their "maladjustment," they build a metaphysics. Their central problem is constantly posed in the following terms: Why does something rather than nothing exist? Do I really exist? And do the things that surround me exist? Those are the fundamental themes of Existentialism; and Sartre's thesis on *Being and Nothingness* remains within this realm of metaphysical pathology. The healthy man's philosophy begins beyond that point.

The world in disorder of the bourgeoisie cannot, at the risk of death, allow intelligence to have the upper hand. In order to perpetuate chaos, prudence dictates that thinking be exiled into a world of abstraction. When every intellectual begins to revolve in his shining metaphysical bubble like a squirrel in its cage, the social system no longer runs any risk. And everyone is satisfied: our

[1] Literally, "clean slate," referring to the mind before receiving impressions. [*Editor.*]

[2] Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, New York. [*Editor.*]

philosopher rejoices at his "freedom" and the social system at its "security."

The Resistance movement forced many of the sleepwalking intellectuals to awaken. Sartre was one of them. He finally had the feeling that he was going to be able to make something of his freedom. "Never were we freer than under the German occupation," he wrote nostalgically in the publication, *Les Lettres Françaises,* in September, 1944. Then, he explains, it was a question of "saying no." And even that is symptomatic: to be free means to refuse. That is the point of view of those who belong to the past: freedom is negation. For those who march toward the future, freedom means adherence and building. Sartre, and those who resemble him, found in the Resistance movement a greater isolation: "This total responsibility, in total solitude, is it not the very unfolding of our freedom?" he asked in the same article.

And when there was no longer anything to deny, or rather when the most important thing was to stop denying, what was one to do with one's freedom? That freedom, which was nothing but isolation and refusal, turned out to be a formless freedom. Sartre and his kind never felt themselves part of the masses, one with men and their history. So to him freedom is not creative participation in the dialectics of necessity. To rejoin the ranks, one must make an arbitrary leap—as irrational as the "fall" of Epicurus's atoms—outside the metaphysical cage. "A man does not exist in the manner of a tree or a pebble"; he must "make himself a worker," Sartre asserted in his initial article in *Les Temps modernes.*

Commenting on the definition of Existentialism ("for man, existence precedes essence"), Sartre writes: "Man rises up in the world and defines himself afterward." We willingly grant him that man has no "definition" in the logical sense of the term, that is, he does not possess an aggregate or *eternal* system of attributes and characteristics. But he has a past—and a clearly determined past. Man, in the words of the poet Ponge, is *not only the future of man;* he is *also* the past of man.

To omit that is to doom us to immobility and impotence, for it means that we have cut off the two living roots of our freedom: history and knowledge. *Uprooted from history, freedom is nothing but an ineffective ersatz.*

We are not naked savages without a past, arriving in a virgin forest in order to "choose" to be free. History exists, and we are at the end of its sharply defined trajectory. It is our springboard from which to go forward toward a higher freedom.

We are neither the only ones nor the first ones to travel "the roads of freedom." Some have begun to clear the ground, others are clearing it around us. We are heirs of history. And history means other people, the dead and the living; they have handed down to us equipment and techniques which are imperfect but which do exist. They are called the social system; and they coordinate the efforts of man, even though they are doing it rather badly at the moment.

In a word, freedom is not a gift from heaven placed in my cradle, but a job begun by others, and at which I will work more effectively the more intelligently I associate myself with others in the collective workshop of history. By omitting history, Existentialism dooms us to the stone-headed axe of primitive man or to the solitude of the artisan in clearing the roads of freedom. Several thousand years of human history have taught us more effective methods.

But, some will say, I am free to join your collective workshop or not to join it, and therein lies my total responsibility, my absolute choice. Sartre writes that any given worker "is free since he can always choose to accept his lot with resignation or revolt against it."

But if this choice is as completely free and timeless as he would have us believe, how explain the fact that, as the contradictions in capitalist society sharpen, the overwhelming majority of workers chooses a revolutionary position? And is it not exceptional for a big capitalist to rally to the revolution?

It can only be explained by the fact that the individual's role in production, that is, the class to which he belongs, determines in a very great measure his choice. So the decision is no longer absolute and timeless; it flows from the realization of certain necessities. Between myself and freedom, there is knowledge.

At this point the second condition for freedom intervenes: science. *Freedom is borne by science like a plant on its stalk.* An irrational freedom rising in the chaos of a world without laws dooms us to impotence, that is, to slavery and despair.

This formless freedom makes for a history that is unforeseeable

and without structure. One cannot judge an individual before the series of his acts is ended, in other words, before his death. That is the central theme of Sartre's play, *No Exit*. And since we have not yet had the honor to see the human race die, we cannot judge its history. "The sense of the social past is perpetually in reprieve." (*Being and Nothingness.*) This is a serious matter, for if our past is so spineless and shapeless, if everything changes its meaning at every moment, we are left disarmed in the face of the future. If there is no scientific knowledge of history, there can be no effective techniques in politics.

Thus we see the chief failing of Existentialism: indifference to science. To Sartre it is a hereditary failing: the heritage of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche weighs heavily on these epigones of Existentialism. Willy-nilly, their apology for "subjectivity" develops quickly into a contempt for science. In Sartre, freedom, which is an absolute choice, has nothing to do with reason; history, drowned in subjectivity and the perpetual waiting for a justification that never comes, has nothing to do with science. This should suffice to expose the basically obscurantist character of Existentialism. And this obscurantism, despite Sartre's atheism, will lead more young people to religious faith than to militant action.

Already I can hear some objecting: "Your materialism makes of man an object, a thing; it destroys his freedom and his individual dignity." For a hundred and fifty years the Catholic Church has repeated this argument against all revolutionary materialists. And is it not a paradox and an arrant denial of historical experience to make such a reproach against the materialist philosophy? Have not two centuries of persecution, from the Encyclopedists to Gracchus Babeuf and from Blanqui to the Marxists, aroused the greatest heroism and sacrifices in the battles for freedom?

To oppose materialism and freedom, determinism and freedom, means to make a caricature of materialism and determinism. In *Les Temps modernes,* Sartre defines matter as follows: "What characterizes matter is its inertia. That means that it is incapable of producing anything by itself. A vehicle of movements and energy, these movements and this energy always come to it from the outside: it borrows them and yields them."

In an article written some time ago, the late Paul Langevin commented that such a definition lagged two thousand years behind

the development of the sciences. Lucretius (following Epicurus) concretized this image: an infinity of tiny pebbles falling in the void and deviating from each other according to the elementary laws of friction. To insert freedom into this mechanism, Lucretius needed a miracle, a break with this mechanism which, in his eyes, defined reason. He called this miracle, this irrational element, the *clinamen* (the inclination of a thing). It is the same irrational and the same miracle that Sartre seeks when he asks for "this little bit of withdrawal which is indispensable to man in order to dominate the determinism of his life."

But Sartre no longer has the same excuse as Lucretius. For two thousand years of scientific progress have given us a less simplified picture of determinism and matter. In order to live and make progress in the production of his means of existence, man needs "a science which will make him master and possessor of nature." He must know the laws of nature in order to know at what point in the chain he has to insert his personal action so as to mold nature according to his needs.

This knowledge of the connections between the phenomena of nature is called determinism. And the cause is that link upon which I can act: it therefore varies according to the complexity of the image of the world I possess and according to my means of intervention, that is to say, according to the degree of progress in science and technology. So this knowledge of the connections between the phenomena of nature does not have an immutable definition: it is modified and refined with every great scientific discovery.

At the time of Descartes, following his discoveries in analytic geometry, the algebraic function furnished the model for this knowledge; and in that period, in which Vaucanson's *automata* were the last word in technology, many felt that all things were connected in nature as the various parts of a machine are connected with one another.

Such a definition did not exhaust and, above all, did not arrest the notion of determinism. Mechanistic determinism was only a stage, a moment in the conception of nature and its laws. Scientific methods, dealing with increasingly complex objects, have enriched the concept of determinism and made it more flexible. As Lange-

vin noted, it is not a question of a retreat from or disavowal of determinism; for now one perceives more connections and handles them with more sureness and power.

Biology, then sociology and history, have allowed us to form a richer idea of determinism, which includes in the domain over which it rules both the perpetual creation of life and the statistical determinism of social phenomena such as suicide, unemployment, crime, and prostitution. And all the other sciences have benefited from these new researches. Physics in its turn is using statistical determinism; and the current conception of matter makes of it a permanent center of creation and destruction similar to life.

Since, in the age of the atom bomb, we have a different idea of matter and determinism from that obtaining in the period of Vaucanson's *automata,* science permits us to substitute a chain of more complex notions for the metaphysical polar notions of mechanistic determinism and absolute free will. These notions, moreover, are more in line with everyday experience and with that of the sciences. Between these two limits, man is neither a robot nor a miracle-maker. His freedom is not opposed to determinism—only the latter nourishes it.

Of course, in the development of our science as of our history there are moments, if not of rupture, at least of uncertainty. Or rather, moments of less certain and less probable choice. They are not the stuff of my moral life. They do not even have a place of outstanding dignity in moral life; they are the slag. They reveal temporary gaps, either in my personal intelligence or in science.

I am freer the more lucid and the better informed I am; I am freer when I can say with more certainty: I cannot choose otherwise. Spinoza, and after him Hegel, taught us that to be free means to bear within ourselves all the reasons for our action.

To be sure, reason is not to us what it was to them: that is, an eternal reality, independent of the efforts of science and technology to mold it each day. The necessity that determines our action is often only approximate, as is our knowledge itself. But what remains true is that the more perfect this approximation is, the more compulsive our knowledge becomes. And on the day when there is finally no opaqueness either in our social relations or in our relations with nature, on that day the dream of Socrates will come true.

This necessity, all the more compulsive in that it is more "reasonable," is the highest form of freedom. It is what Engels called "the leap from the kingdom of necessity into the kingdom of freedom."

So to us Marxists, freedom means a greater power over nature, over social relations, and over ourselves. In this respect, it is the measure of progress in knowledge and society. It is essentially affirmation and creation; it means building for the future. That is why socially this concept of freedom is the attribute of builders and not gravediggers (as history confirms). It is the philosophy of those who love the future, who call it forth and prepare it, knowing in advance that it belongs to them. This was true of men like Helvetius and Diderot, materialist philosophers who were spokesmen of the bourgeoisie on the eve of the Great French Revolution. It is true today of the working class, convinced in its turn that the future belongs to it, since 1848 with Marx and Engels, since 1917 with Lenin and Stalin.

Having turned his back on science, Sartre can no longer return to action. He can neither furnish nor even accept an effective method of transforming reality. In truth, having abandoned en route everything that can make freedom rational and our history scientific, Sartre allows the minds of his disciples to wander between a subjectivity without laws and a world without structure. Then what becomes of objectivity in this universe without rules? It simply fades out. Sartre rejects materialism and yet claims that he avoids idealism. Here we see the futility of that impossible "third party." Phenomenalism is an unstable position, but in Sartre it is not ambiguous: it sinks completely into idealism, and into the worst of idealisms, which does not preserve that solid rational framework which Hegel succeeded in giving to it.

This very sketchy outline of existentialism, in which we have merely indicated several of its characteristic points, allows us to define this philosophy with respect to Marxism. Sartre wrote some time ago in *Action* that he was not far "from the conception of man to be found in Marx." His ambition was "to complete Marxism on the side of subjectivity."

But Existentialism does not complete Marxism, it contradicts Marxism. From its doctrine of free will to its idealist theory of knowledge, from its negation of scientific history to its indifference

toward science, Existentialism castrates man. It deprives him of his liberating weapons: the science of the world and the science of man. And the revolution is only a word if it is not first of all science. The free man or revolutionary is not he who discovers within himself, as a possibility of personal adventure, the power to deny or to "reduce to nothingness," as Sartre would say, but he who, having made of science "his very flesh" (to use an expression of Lenin), measures his freedom by the power of social construction in which he participates.

By this mirage of a solitary and formless freedom, attractive to human beings without roots and impotent with despair, Sartre leads our students into a dead end. His play, *The Flies,* expresses pathetically the anguish of too many bloodless intellectuals who look for something real beyond their culture: "I live in the air. . . . I am all alone," Orestes cries, and he begs for the "joy of going somewhere." Sartre cannot go beyond this abstract aspiration to the concrete.

His spineless world has lost its object. His freedom has lost its content. And he leaves naked and starving those he has found mutilating their old clothes and vomiting forth their old food. Nothing in his philosophy opens the road to action. That is why this philosophy is profoundly reactionary. It shunts those it affects onto a kind of siding.

As a matter of fact, the "ravages" of Existentialism are very limited: it is not an epidemic that can grip a whole nation. This thinking severed from the real world has no hold on the working class, which is today the bearer of the golden rule of philosophy: thought is born of action, is action, serves action. It involves at most a titillation or mild fever affecting a few intellectuals who considered themselves "demobilized" after the Resistance movement had played its part. Cut off from the broad masses of the people, they like to make a god of their confusion and their "nothingness"; and, believing that they cannot find a goal worthy of their talents, they are satisfied with ersatzes and bargain-counter revolutions. It is up to Marxism to teach our intellectuals that they have something better to do than to project into the absolute their own contradictions, which are those of capitalist society, and something better than to allow their desire for a full life to evaporate in metaphysical smoke. . . .

HERBERT MARCUSE

Herbert Marcuse (1898——) is Professor of Political Science at Brandeis University and a research associate of the Institute of Social Research (New York and Frankfurt). Educated at the Universities of Berlin and Freiburg, he was forced to flee Germany when Hitler came to power.

He has lectured at Columbia and Harvard Universities and been a research fellow at their Russian institutes. He is the author of *Reason and Revolution* (1941), *Eros and Civilization* (1955), *Soviet Marxism* (1958), and *One-Dimensional Man* (1964).

His criticism of *Being and Nothingness* was one of the first scholarly appraisals of Sartre's philosophical ideas by an American proponent of Marxism. It appeared in the quarterly *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* of March, 1948.

Professor Marcuse analyzed the principal categories of Sartre's metaphysics: Being-for-itself, Being-in-itself and Being-for-others in the first three parts of his article. In the concluding fourth and fifth sections, reprinted here, he endeavored to show how the Existentialist concept of freedom located entirely in the individual consciousness conflicted with the materialist interpretation of freedom as a product of social-historical development that could be expanded only through the more rational organization of the relationships of production.

SARTRE, HISTORICAL MATERIALISM AND PHILOSOPHY

In Sartre's interpretation of the socio-historical sphere, the reification of the subject (which, in the private sphere, appeared as the "*corps vécu comme chair*") manifests itself in the existence of the industrial worker. The modern entrepreneur tends to

> reduce the worker to the state of a thing by assimilating his behavior to [that of] properties.[1]

In view of the brute mechanization of the worker and his work, in view of his complete subjugation to the capitalistic machine process, it would be ridiculous to preach him the "internal" liberty which the philosophers have preached throughout the centuries:

> The revolutionary himself . . . distrusts freedom. And rightly so. There has never been a lack of prophets to proclaim to him that he was free, and each time in order to cheat him.[2]

Sartre mentions in this connection the Stoic concept of freedom, Christian liberty, and Bergson's idea of freedom:

> They all come back to a certain internal liberty which man can preserve in any situation whatsoever. This internal liberty is nothing but an idealistic mystification. . . .[3]

It would seem that Sartre's own ontological concept of freedom would well be covered by this verdict of "idealistic mystification," and *L'Être et le néant* provides little ground for evading it. Now he recognizes the fact that, in the empirical reality, man's exist-

[1] *Les Temps modernes* (July, 1946), p. 15. [All notes in this selection are the author's.]
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[3] *Ibid.*

ence is organized in such a way that his freedom is totally "alienated," and that nothing short of a revolutionary change in the social structure can restore the development of his liberty.[4] If this is true, if, by the organization of society, human freedom can be alienated to such an extent that it all but ceases to exist, then the content of human freedom is determined, not by the structure of the *"Pour-soi,"* but by the specific historical forces which shape the human society. However, Sartre tries to rescue his idea of freedom from Historical Materialism.[5] He accepts the revolution as the only way to the liberation of mankind, but he insists that the revolutionary solution presupposes man's freedom to *seize* this solution, in other words, that man must be free *"prior"* to his liberation. Sartre maintains that this presupposition destroys the basis of materialism, according to which man is wholly determined by the material world. But according to Historical Materialism, the revolution remains an act of freedom—in spite of all material determination. Historical Materialism has recognized this freedom in the important role of the maturity of the revolutionary consciousness. Marx' constant emphasis on the material determination of the consciousness in all its manifestations points up the relationships between the subject and his world as they actually prevail in the capitalist society, where freedom has shrunk to the possibility of recognizing and seizing the necessity for liberation.

In the concrete historical reality, the freedom of the *"Pour-soi,"* to whose glorification Sartre devotes his entire book, is thus nothing but one of the preconditions for the possibility of freedom—it is not freedom itself. Moreover, isolated from the specific historical context in which alone the "transcendence" of the subject may become a precondition of freedom, and hypostatized into the ontological form of the subject as such, this transcendental liberty becomes the very token of enslavement. The antifascist who is tortured to death may retain his moral and intellectual freedom to "transcend" this situation: he is still tortured to death. Human freedom is the very negation of that transcendental liberty in which Sartre sees its realization. In *L'Être et le néant,* this negation appeared only in the *"attitude désirante"*: it was the loss of the

[4] *Les Temps modernes* (June, 1946), pp. 15–16.
[5] *Ibid.*

"Pour-soi," its reification in the *"corps vécu comme chair"* which suggested a new idea of freedom and happiness.

Similarly, in Sartre's interpretation of the socio-historical sphere, it is the existence, not of the free but of the reified subject which points the way toward real liberation. The wage laborer, whose existence is that of a thing, and whose activity is essentially action on things, conceives of his liberation naturally as a change in the relationship between man and things. Sartre interprets the process between capital and wage labor in terms of the Hegelian process between master and servant. The laborer, who works in the service of the entrepreneur on the means of production, transforms, through his labor, these means into the instruments for his liberation. True, his labor is imposed upon him, and he is deprived of its products, but "within these limitations," his labor confers upon him "la maîtrise sur les choses":

> The worker sees himself as the possibility of modifying endlessly the form of material objects by acting on them in accordance with certain universal rules. In other words, it is the determinateness of matter which offers him the first view of his freedom. . . . He transcends his state of slavery through his action on things, and things give back to him, by the very rigidity of their bondage, the image of a tangible freedom which consists of modifying them. And since the outline of tangible freedom appears to him shackled to determinism, it is not surprising that he visualizes the relationship of man to man, which appears to him as that of tyrannic liberty to humbled obedience, replaced by a relationship of man to thing, and finally, since, from another point of view, the man who controls things is in turn a thing himself, by the relationship of thing to thing." [6]

Sartre maintains that the materialistic conception of freedom is itself the victim of reification insofar as it conceives the liberated world in terms of a new relationship among things, a new organization of things. As the liberation originates in the process of labor, it remains defined by this process, and the liberated society appears only as *"une entreprise harmonieuse d'exploitation du monde."* [7]

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

The result would simply be "a more rational organization of society" [8]—not the realization of human freedom and happiness.

This critique is still under the influence of "idealistic mystifications." The "more rational organization of society," which Sartre belittles as *"simplement,"* is the very precondition of freedom. It means the abolition of exploitation and repression in all their forms. And since exploitation and repression are rooted in the material structure of society, their abolition requires a change in this structure: a more rational organization of the relationships of production. In Historical Materialism, this organization of the liberated society is so little "defined by labor" (*"définie par le travail"*) that Marx once formulated the Communist goal as the "abolition of labor," and the shortening of the working day as the precondition for the establishment of the "realm of freedom." The formula conveys the image of the unfettered satisfaction of the human faculties and desires, thus suggesting the essential identity of freedom and happiness which is at the core of materialism.

Sartre notes that, throughout history, materialism was linked with a revolutionary attitude:

> No matter how far back I go, I find it [materialistic faith] linked with the revolutionary attitude.[9]

Indeed, the materialist faith was revolutionary insofar as it was materialistic, that is to say, as it shifted the definition of human freedom from the sphere of consciousness to that of material satisfaction, from toil to enjoyment, from the moral to the pleasure principle. The idealistic philosophy has made freedom into something frightening and tyrannic, bound up with repression, resignation, scarcity, and frustration. Behind the idealistic concept of freedom lurked the demand for an incessant moral and practical performance, an enterprise the profits of which were to be invested ever again in the same activity—an activity which was really rewarding only for a very small part of the population. The materialistic conception of freedom implies the discontinuation of this activity and performance: it makes the reality of freedom a pleasure. Prior to the achievement of this "utopian" goal, materialism

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 21.
[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

teaches man the necessities which determine his life in order to break them by his liberation. And his liberation is nothing less than the abolition of repression.

Sartre hits upon the revolutionary function of the materialistic principle in his interpretation of the *"attitude désirante"*: there, and only there, is his concept of freedom identical with the abolition of repression. But the tendencies which make for the destruction of his idealistic conception remain confined within the framework of philosophy and do not lead to the destruction of the ideology itself. Consequently, in Sartre's work, they manifest themselves only as a disintegration of the traditional philosophical "style." This disintegration is expressed in his rejection of the *"esprit de sérieux"* (seriousness).

According to Sartre, the *"esprit de sérieux"* must be banned from philosophy because, by taking the *"réalité humaine"* as a totality of objective relationships, to be understood and evaluated in terms of objective standards, the *"esprit de sérieux"* offends against the free play of subjective forces which is the very essence of the *"réalité humaine."* By its very "style" philosophy thus fails to gain the adequate approach to its subject. In contrast, the Existentialist style is designed to assert, already through the mode of presentation, the absolutely free movement of the *Cogito,* the *"Pour-soi,"* the creative subject. Its *"jouir à l'être"* is to be reproduced by the philosophical style. Existentialism plays with every affirmation until it shows forth as negation, qualifies every statement until it turns into its opposite, extends every position to absurdity, makes liberty into compulsion and compulsion into liberty, choice into necessity and necessity into choice, passes from philosophy to *Belles Lettres* and vice versa, mixes ontology and sexology, etc. The heavy seriousness of Hegel and Heidegger is translated into artistic play. The ontological analysis includes a series of *"scènes amoureuses,"* and the novel sets forth philosophical theses in italics. [10]

This disintegration of the philosophical style reflects the inner contradictions of all Existential philosophy: the concrete human existence cannot be understood in terms of philosophy. The con-

[10] Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Sang des Autres.*

tradiction derives from the historical conditions under which Western philosophy has developed and to which it remained committed throughout its development. The separation of the intellectual from the material production, of leisure and the leisure class from the underlying population, of theory from practice caused a fundamental gap between the terms of philosophy and the terms of existence. When Aristotle insisted that philosophy presupposed the establishment of the arts directed to the necessities of life, he defined not only the situation of the philosopher but of philosophy itself. The content of the basic philosophical concepts implies a degree of freedom from the necessities of life which is enjoyed only by a small number of men. The general concepts which aim at the structures and forms of being transcend the realm of necessity and the life of those who are confined to this realm. Their existence is not on the philosophical level. Conversely, philosophy does not possess the conceptual instruments for comprehending their existence, which is the concreteness of the *"réalité humaine."* The concepts which do adequately describe this concreteness are not the exemplifications and particularizations of any philosophical concept. The existence of a slave or of a factory worker or of a salesclerk is not an "example" of the concept of being or freedom or life or man. The latter concepts may well be "applicable" to such forms of existence and "cover" them by their scope, but this coverage refers only to an irrelevant part or aspect of the reality. The philosophical concepts abstract necessarily from the concrete existence, and they abstract from its very content and essence; their generality transcends the existence *qualitatively,* into a different *genus.* Man as such, as "kind" is the genuine theme of philosophy; his *hic et nunc* is the ὕλη (matter, stuff) which remains outside the realm of philosophy. Aristotle's dictum that man is an ultimate indivisible kind (ἔσχατον ἄτομον; ἄτομον εἶδοσ; ἄτομον τῶ σένει), which defies further concretization pronounces the inner impossibility of all Existentialist philosophy.

Against its intentions and efforts, Existentialism demonstrates the truth of Aristotle's statement. We have seen how, in Sartre's philosophy, the concept of the *"Pour-soi"* vacillates between that of the individual subject and that of the universal *Ego* or consciousness. Most of the essential qualities which he attributes to the *"Pour-soi"* are qualities of man as a *genus.* As such, they are *not*

the essential qualities of man's concrete existence. Sartre makes reference to Marx's early writings, but not to Marx's statement that man, in his concrete historical existence, is not (yet) the realization of the *genus* man. This proposition states the fact that the historical forms of society have crippled the development of the general human faculties, of the *humanitas*. The concept of the *genus* man is thus at the same time the concept of the abstract-universal and of the *ideal* man—but is *not* the concept of the *"réalité humaine."*

But if the *"réalité humaine"* is not the concretization of the *genus* man, it is equally indescribable in terms of the individual. For the same historical conditions which crippled the realization of the genus man also crippled the realization of his individuality. The activities, attitudes, and efforts which circumscribe his concrete existence are, in the last analysis, not his but those of his class, profession, position, society. In this sense is the life of the individual indeed the life of the universal, but this universal is a configuration of specific historical forces, made up by the various groups, interests, institutions, etc., which form the social reality. The concepts which actually reach the concrete existence must therefore derive from a theory of society. Hegel's philosophy comes so close to the structure of the concrete existence because he interprets it in terms of the historical universal, but because he sees in this universal only the manifestation of the Idea he remains within the realm of philosophical abstraction. One step more toward concretization would have meant a transgression beyond philosophy itself.

Such transgression occurred in the opposition to Hegel's philosophy. Kierkegaard and Marx are frequently claimed as the origins of Existential philosophy. But neither Kierkegaard nor Marx wrote Existential philosophy. When they came to grips with the concrete existence, they abandoned and repudiated philosophy. Kierkegaard comes to the conclusion that the situation of man can be comprehended and "solved" only by theology and religion. For Marx, the conception of the *"réalité humaine"* is the critique of political economy and the theory of the socialist revolution. The opposition against Hegel pronounces the essential inadequacy of philosophy in the face of the concrete human existence.

Since then, the gap between the terms of philosophy and those

of existence has widened. The experience of the totalitarian organization of the human existence forbids to conceive freedom in any other form than that of a free society. No philosophy can possibly comprehend the prevailing concreteness. Heidegger's existential ontology remains intentionally "transcendental": his category of *Dasein* is neutral toward all concretization. Nor does he attempt to elaborate *Weltanschauung* and ethics. In contrast, Sartre attempts such concretization with the methods and terms of philosophy—and the concrete existence remains "outside" the philosophical conception, as a mere example or illustration. His political radicalism lies outside his philosophy, extraneous to its essence and content. Concreteness and radicalism characterize the style of his work rather than its content. And this may be part of the secret of its success. He presents the old ideology in the new cloak of radicalism and rebellion. Conversely, he makes destruction and frustration, sadism and masochism, sensuality and politics into ontological conditions. He exposes the danger zones of society, but transforms them into structures of Being. His philosophy is less the expression of defiance and revolt than of a morality which teaches men to abandon all utopian dreams and efforts and to arrange themselves on the firm ground of reality:

> Existentialism leads men to understand that reality alone counts, that dreams, expectations, and hopes only permit the definition of a man as a deceived dream, an abortive hope, useless expectation. . . .[11]

Existentialism has indeed a strong undertone of positivism: the reality has the last word.

[11] *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme*, p. 58.

IV

SECOND PHASE OF THE DEBATE

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Sartre announced his realignment with Marxism in an article that was written for a Polish magazine in 1957 and later published, in revised form, in *Les Temps modernes* under the title of *Marxism and Existentialism*. In 1960 it was included as an independent prefatory essay to Volume I of *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. This was published in English translation in 1963 as *Search for a Method*, from which pages 3 to 34 and 174 to 181 have been selected.

The thesis of this work is that Existentialism is "a parasitic system" that nevertheless has the mission of curing the anemia afflicting present-day Marxism. This about-face shifted the axis of the dispute between the Marxists and the Sartreans. Did dialectical materialism require a blood transfusion from Existentialism and could the two be merged into one to the benefit of both? These questions are now in the forefront of the debate between the rival philosophies.

MARXISM AND EXISTENTIALISM

Philosophy appears to some people as a homogeneous milieu: there thoughts are born and die, there systems are built, and there, in turn, they collapse. Others take *Philosophy* for a specific attitude which we can freely adopt at will. Still others see it as a determined segment of culture. In our view *Philosophy* does not exist. In whatever form we consider it, this shadow of science, this Gray Eminence of humanity, is only a hypostatized abstraction.

Actually, there are *philosophies*. Or rather—for you would never at the same time find more than *one* living philosophy—under certain well-defined circumstances *a* philosophy is developed for the purpose of giving expression to the general movement of the society. So long as a philosophy is alive, it serves as a cultural milieu for its contemporaries. This disconcerting object presents itself *at the same time* under profoundly distinct aspects, the unification of which it is continually effecting.

A philosophy is first of all a particular way in which the "rising" class becomes conscious of itself.[1] This consciousness may be clear or confused, indirect or direct. At the time of the *noblesse de robe* [2] and of mercantile capitalism, a bourgeoisie of lawyers, merchants, and bankers gained a certain self-awareness through Cartesianism; a century and a half later, in the primitive stage of industrialization, a bourgeoisie of manufacturers, engineers, and scientists dimly discovered itself in the image of universal man which Kantianism offered to it.

But if it is to be truly philosophical, this mirror must be presented as the totalization of contemporary Knowledge. The philosopher effects the unification of everything that is known, following certain guiding schemata which express the attitudes and techniques of the rising class regarding its own period and the world. Later, when the details of this Knowledge have been, one by one, challenged and destroyed by the advance of learning, the overall concept will still remain as an undifferentiated content. These

[1] If I do not mention here the *person* who is objectified and revealed in his work, it is because the philosophy of a period extends far beyond the philosopher who first gave it shape—no matter how great he may be. But conversely we shall see that the study of particular doctrines is inseparable from a real investigation of philosophies. Cartesianism illuminates the period and *situates* Descartes within the totalitarian development of analytical reason; in these terms, Descartes, taken as a person and as a philosopher, clarifies the historical (hence the particular) meaning of the new rationality up to the middle of the eighteenth century. [All notes in this selection are Sartre's unless otherwise specified.]

[2] *Noblesse de robe* was originally the designation given in France to those members of the bourgeoisie who were awarded titles of nobility in recognition of outstanding achievement or services to the State. Later is was used more loosely to refer to any "new" nobility. [Translator's note.]

achievements of knowing, after having been first bound together by principles, will in turn—crushed and almost undecipherable—bind together the principles. Reduced to its simplest expression, the philosophical object will remain in "the objective mind" in the form of a regulative Idea, pointing to an infinite task. Thus, in France one speaks of "the Kantian Idea" or in Germany of "Fichte's *Weltanschauung*." This is because a philosophy, when it is at the height of its power, is never presented as something inert, as the passive, already terminated unity of Knowledge. Born from the movement of society, it is itself a movement and acts upon the future. This concrete totalization is at the same time the abstract project of pursuing the unification up to its final limits. In this sense philosophy is characterized as a method of investigation and explication. The confidence which it has in itself and in its future development merely reproduces the certitudes of the class which supports it. Every philosophy is practical, even the one which at first appears to be the most contemplative. Its method is a social and political weapon. The analytical, critical rationalism of the great Cartesians has survived them; born from conflict, it looked back to clarify the conflict. At the time when the bourgeoisie sought to undermine the institutions of the Ancien Régime, it attacked the outworn significations which tried to justify them.[3] Later it gave service to liberalism, and it provided a doctrine for procedures that attempted to realize the "atomization" of the Proletariat.

Thus a philosophy remains efficacious so long as the *praxis*[4] which has engendered it, which supports it, and which is clarified by it, is still alive. But it is transformed, it loses its uniqueness, it is stripped of its original, dated content to the extent that it gradually impregnates the masses so as to become in and through them

[3] In the case of Cartesianism, the action of "philosophy" remains negative; it clears the ground, it destroys, and it enables men, across the infinite complexities and particularisms of the feudal system, to catch a glimpse of the abstract universality of bourgeois property. But under different circumstances, when the social struggle itself assumes other forms, the theory's contribution can be positive.

[4] The Greek word *praxis* means "deed" or "action." As Sartre uses it, *praxis* refers to any purposeful human activity. It is closely allied to the existential project which Sartre made so important a part of his philosophy in *Being and Nothingness*. [Translator's note.]

a collective instrument of emancipation. In this way Cartesianism, in the eighteenth century, appears under two indissoluble and complementary aspects. On the one hand, as the Idea of reason, as an analytical method, it inspires Holbach, Helvetius, Diderot, even Rousseau; it is Cartesianism which we find at the source of antireligious pamphlets as well as of mechanistic materialism. On the other hand, it passes into anonymity and conditions the attitudes of the Third Estate. In each case universal, analytical Reason vanishes and reappears in the form of "spontaneity." This means that the immediate response of the oppressed to oppression will be *critical*. The abstract revolt precedes the French Revolution and armed insurrection by some years. But the directed violence of weapons will overthrow privileges which have already been dissolved in Reason. Things go so far that the philosophical mind crosses the boundaries of the bourgeoisie and infiltrates the ranks of the populace. This is the moment at which the French bourgeosie claims that it is a universal class; the infiltrations of its philosophy will permit it to mask the struggles which are beginning to split the Third Estate and will allow it to find a language and common gestures for all revolutionary classes.

If philosophy is to be simultaneously a totalization of knowledge, a method, a regulative Idea, an offensive weapon, and a community of language, if this "vision of the world" is also an instrument which ferments rotten societies, if this particular conception of a man or of a group of men becomes the culture and sometimes the nature of a whole class—then it is very clear that the periods of philosophical creation are rare. Between the seventeenth century and the twentieth, I see three such periods, which I would designate by the names of the men who dominated them: there is the "moment" of Descartes and Locke, that of Kant and Hegel, finally that of Marx. These three philosophies become, each in its turn, the humus of every particular thought and the horizon of all culture; there is no going beyond them so long as man has not gone beyond the historical moment which they express. I have often remarked on the fact that an "anti-Marxist" argument is only the apparent rejuvenation of a pre-Marxist idea. A so-called going beyond Marxism will be at worst only a return to pre-Marxism; at best, only the rediscovery of a thought already con-

tained in the philosophy which one believes he has gone beyond. As for "revisionism," this is either a truism or an absurdity. There is no need to readapt a living philosophy to the course of the world; it adapts itself by means of thousands of new efforts, thousands of particular pursuits, for the philosophy is one with the movement of society. Despite their good intentions, those very people who believe themselves to be the most faithful spokesmen for their predecessors transform the thoughts which they want simply to repeat; methods are modified because they are applied to new objects. If this movement on the part of the philosophy no longer exists, one of two things is true: either the philosophy is dead or it is going through a "crisis." In the first case there is no question of revising, but of razing a rotten building; in the second case the "philosophical crisis" is the particular expression of a social crisis, and its immobility is conditioned by the contradictions which split the society. A so-called revision, performed by "experts," would be, therefore, only an idealist mystification without real significance. It is the very movement of History, the struggle of men on all planes and on all levels of human activity, which will set free captive thought and permit it to attain its full development.

Those intellectuals who come after the great flowering and who undertake to set the systems in order or to use the new methods to conquer territory not yet fully explored, those who provide practical applications for the theory and employ it as a tool to destroy and to construct—they should not be called philosophers. They cultivate the domain, they take an inventory, they erect certain structures there, they may even bring about certain internal changes; but they still get their nourishment from the living thought of the great dead. They are borne along by the crowd on the march, and it is the crowd which constitutes their cultural milieu and their future, which determines the field of their investigations, and even of their "creation." These *relative* men I propose to call "ideologists." [5] And since I am to speak of Existentialism, let it be understood that I take it to be an "ideology." It is a parasitical system living on the margin of Knowledge, which at first it opposed

[5] Sartre's word is *idéologues*. I translate it "ideologists" after the analogy of words such as *philologue* (English "philologist"). [Translator's note.]

but into which today it seeks to be integrated. If we are to understand its present ambitions and its function we must go back to the time of Kierkegaard.

The most ample philosophical totalization is Hegelianism. Here Knowledge is raised to its most eminent dignity. It is not limited to viewing Being from the outside; it incorporates Being and dissolves it in itself. Mind objectifies itself, alienates itself, and recovers itself—without ceasing; it realizes itself through its own history. Man externalizes himself, he loses himself in things; but every alienation is surmounted by the absolute Knowledge of the philosopher. Thus those cleavages, those contradictions which cause our unhappiness are moments which are posited in order that they may be surpassed. We are not only *knowers;* in the triumph of intellectual self-consciousness, we appear as the *known.* Knowledge pierces us through and through; it situates us before dissolving us. We are integrated alive in the supreme totalization. Thus the pure, lived aspect of a tragic experience, a suffering unto death, is absorbed by the system as a relatively abstract determination which must be mediated, as a passage toward the Absolute, the only genuine concrete.[6]

[6] It is entirely possible, of course, to draw Hegel over to the side of Existentialism, and Hyppolite endeavored to do so, not without success, in his *Studies in Marx and Hegel.* Was it not Hegel who first pointed out that "the appearance as such is a reality"? And is not his panlogicism complemented by a pantragicism? Can we not with good reason say that for Hegel "existences are enmeshed in the history which they make and which, as a concrete universality, is what judges and transcends them"? One can do this easily, but that is not the question. What Kierkegaard opposes in Hegel is the fact that, for Hegel, the tragedy of a particular life is always surpassed. The lived fades away into knowledge. Hegel talks to us about the slave and his fear of death. But the fear which was *felt* becomes the simple object of knowing, and the moment of a transformation which is itself surpassed. In Kierkegaard's view it is of no importance that Hegel speaks of "freedom to die" or that he correctly describes certain aspects of faith. What Kierkegaard complains of in Hegelianism is that it neglects the *unsurpassable opaqueness* of the lived experience. The disagreement is not only and not primarily at the level of concepts but rather has to do with the critique of knowledge and the delimitation of its scope. For example, it is perfectly correct to point out that Hegel is profoundly aware of the unity of life and consciousness and of the opposition between them. But it is also true that these are already recognized as incomplete *from the point of view of* the totality. Or,

Compared with Hegel, Kierkegaard scarcely seems to count. He is certainly not a philosopher; moreover, he himself refused this title. In fact, he is a Christian who is not willing to let himself be enclosed in the system and who, against Hegel's "intellectualism," asserts unrelentingly the irreducibility and the specificity of what is lived. There is no doubt, as Jean Wahl has remarked, that a Hegelian would have assimilated this romantic and obstinate consciousness to the "unhappy consciousness," a moment which had already been surpassed and known in its essential characteristics. But it is precisely this objective knowledge which Kierkegaard challenges. For him the surpassing of the unhappy consciousness remains purely verbal. The *existing* man cannot be assimilated by a system of ideas. Whatever one may say or think about suffering, it escapes knowledge to the extent that it is suffered in itself, for itself, and to the degree that knowledge remains powerless to transform it. "The philosopher constructs a palace of ideas and lives in a hovel." Of course, it is religion which Kierkegaard wants to defend. Hegel was not willing for Christianity to be "surpassed," but for this very reason he made it the highest moment of human existence. Kierkegaard, on the contrary, insists on the transcendence of the Divine; between man and God he puts an infinite distance. The existence of the Omnipotent cannot be the object of an objective knowledge; it becomes the aim of a subjective faith. And this faith, in turn, with its strength and its spontaneous affirmation, will never be reduced to a moment which can be surpassed and classified, to a knowing. Thus Kierkegaard is led to champion the cause of pure, unique subjectivity against the objective universality of essence, the narrow, passionate intransigence of the immediate life against the tranquil mediation of all reality, faith, which stubbornly asserts itself, against scientific evidence—*despite* the scandal. He looks everywhere for weapons to aid him in escaping from

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to use for the moment the terms of modern semeiology—for Hegel, the *Signifying* (at any moment of history) is the movement of Mind (which will be constituted as the signifying-signified and the signified-signifying; that is, as absolute-subject); the *Signified* is the living man and his objectification. For Kierkegaard, man is the Signifying; he himself produces the significations, and no signification points to him from outside (Abraham does not know whether he is Abraham); man is never the *signified* (not even by God).

the terrible "mediation"; he discovers within himself oppositions, indecisions, equivocations which cannot be surpassed: paradoxes, ambiguities, discontinuities, dilemmas, etc. In all these inward conflicts, Hegel would doubtless see only contradictions in formation or in process of development—but this is exactly what Kierkegaard reproaches him for: even before becoming aware of them, the philosopher of Jena would have decided to consider them truncated ideas. In fact, the *subjective* life, just insofar as it is lived, can never be made the object of a knowledge. On principle it escapes knowing, and the relation of the believer to transcendence can only be conceived of in the form of a *going beyond*. This inwardness, which in its narrowness and its infinite depth claims to affirm itself against all philosophy, this subjectivity rediscovered beyond language as the personal adventure of each man in the face of others and of God—this is what Kierkegaard called *existence*.

We see that Kierkegaard is inseparable from Hegel, and that this vehement negation of every system can arise only within a cultural field entirely dominated by Hegelianism. The Dane feels himself hemmed in by concepts, by History, he fights for his life; it is the reaction of Christian romanticism against the rationalist humanization of faith. It would be too easy to reject this work as simply subjectivism; what we ought rather to point out, in placing it back within the framework of its period, is that Kierkegaard has as much right on his side as Hegel has on his. Hegel is right: unlike the Danish ideologist, who obstinately fixed his stand on poor. frozen paradoxes ultimately referring to an empty subjectivity, the philosopher of Jena aims through his concepts at the veritable concrete; for him, mediation is always presented as an enrichment. Kierkegaard is right: grief, need, passion, the pain of men, are brute realities which can be neither surpassed nor changed by knowledge. To be sure, Kierkegaard's religious subjectivism can with good reason be taken as the very peak of idealism; but in relation to Hegel, he marks a progress toward realism, since he insists above all on the *primacy* of the specifically real over thought, that the real cannot be reduced to thought. There are today some psychologists and psychiatrists [7] who consider certain evolutions of our inward life to be the result of a work which it performs upon

[7] *Cf.* Lagache: *Le Travail du deuil* (*The Work of Mourning*).

itself. In this sense Kierkegaardian *existence* is the *work* of our inner life—resistances overcome and perpetually reborn, efforts perpetually renewed, despairs surmounted, provisional failures and precarious victories—and this work is directly opposed to intellectual knowing. Kierkegaard was perhaps the first to point out, against Hegel and thanks to him, the incommensurability of the real and knowledge. This incommensurability may be the origin of a conservative irrationalism; it is even one of the ways in which we may understand this ideologist's writings. But it can be seen also as the death of absolute idealism; ideas do not change men. Knowing the cause of a passion is not enough to overcome it; one must live it, one must oppose other passions to it, one must combat it tenaciously, in short, one must "work oneself over."

It is striking that Marxism addresses the same reproach to Hegel, though from quite another point of view. For Marx, indeed, Hegel has confused objectification, the simple externalization of man in the universe, with the alienation which turns his externalization back against man. Taken by itself—Marx emphasizes this again and again—objectification would be an opening out; it would allow man, who produces and reproduces his life without ceasing and who transforms himself by changing nature, to "contemplate himself in a world which he has created." No dialectical sleight of hand can make alienation come out of it; this is why what is involved here is not a mere play of concepts but real History. "In the social production of their existence, men enter into relations which are determined, necessary, independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a given stage of development of their material productive forces. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the real foundation upon which a legal and political superstructure arises and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond." [8]

Now, in the present phase of our history, productive forces have entered into conflict with relations of production. Creative work is alienated; man does not recognize himself in his own product,

[8] Sartre has not given the source for this important quotation. It comes from Marx's Preface to *Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*. I am indebted for the discovery to Erich Fromm, who quotes the passage in *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1961), p. 17. [Translator's note.]

and his exhausting labor appears to him as a hostile force. Since alienation comes about as the result of this conflict, it is a historical reality and completely irreducible to an idea. If men are to free themselves from it, and if their work is to become the pure objectification of themselves, it is not enough that "consciousness think itself"; there must be *material* work and revolutionary *praxis*. When Marx writes: "Just as we do not judge an individual by his own idea of himself, so we cannot judge a . . . period of revolutionary upheaval by its own self-consciousness," he is indicating the priority of action (work and social *praxis*) over *knowledge* as well as their heterogeneity. He, too, asserts that the human fact is irreducible to knowing, that it must *be lived* and *produced;* but he is not going to confuse it with the empty subjectivity of a puritanical and mystified petite bourgeoisie. He makes of it the immediate theme of the philosophical totalization, and it is the concrete man whom he puts at the center of his research, that man who is defined simultaneously by his needs, by the material conditions of his existence, and by the nature of his work—that is, by his struggle against things and against men.

Thus Marx, rather than Kierkegaard or Hegel, is right, since he asserts with Kierkegaard the specificity of human *existence* and, along with Hegel, takes the concrete man in his objective reality. Under these circumstances, it would seem natural if Existentialism, this idealist protest against idealism, had lost all usefulness and had not survived the decline of Hegelianism.

In fact, Existentialism suffered an eclipse. In the general struggle which bourgeois thought leads against Marxist dialectic, it gets its support from the post-Kantians, from Kant himself, and from Descartes; it never thinks of addressing itself to Kierkegaard. The Dane will reappear at the beginning of the twentieth century, when people will take it into their heads to fight against Marxism by opposing to it pluralisms, ambiguities, paradoxes; that is, his revival dates back to the moment when for the first time bourgeois thought was reduced to being on the defensive. Between the two world wars the appearance of a German Existentialism certainly corresponds—at least in the work of Jaspers [9]—to a surreptitious wish to resuscitate the transcendent. Already—as Jean Wahl has pointed

[9] The case of Heidegger is too complex for me to discuss here.

out—one could wonder if Kierkegaard did not lure his readers into the depths of subjectivity for the sole purpose of making them discover there the unhappiness of man without God. This trap would be quite in keeping with the "great solitary" who denied communication between human beings and who saw no way to influence his fellowman except by "indirect action."

Jaspers himself put his cards on the table. He has done nothing except to comment upon his master; his originality consists especially in putting certain themes into relief and in hiding others. The transcendent, for example, appears at first to be absent from his thought, which in fact is haunted by it. We are taught to catch a presentiment of the transcendent in our failures; it is their profound meaning. This idea is already found in Kierkegaard, but it is less emphasized since this Christian thinks and lives within the compass of a revealed religion. Jaspers, mute on Revelation, leads us back—through discontinuity, pluralism, and impotence—to the pure, formal subjectivity which is discovered and which discovers transcendence through its defeats. Success, indeed, as an *objectification,* would enable the person to inscribe himself in things and finally would compel him to surpass himself. The meditation on failure is perfectly suited to a bourgeoisie which is partially de-Christianized but which regrets its past faith because it has lost confidence in its rationalist, positivist ideology. Kierkegaard already considered that every victory is suspect because it turns man away from himself. Kafka took up this Christian theme again in his *Journal.* And one can find a certain truth in the idea, since in a world of alienation the individual conqueror does not recognize himself in his victory and becomes its slave. But what is important to Jaspers is to derive from all this a subjective pessimism, which ultimately emerges as a theological optimism that dares not speak its name. The transcendent, indeed, remains veiled; it is attested only by its absence. One will never go beyond pessimism; one will have a presentiment of reconciliation while remaining at the level of an insurmountable contradiction and a total cleavage. This condemnation of dialectic is aimed no longer at Hegel, but at Marx. It is no longer the refusal of *Knowledge,* but the refusal of *praxis.* Kierkegaard was unwilling to play the role of a concept in the Hegelian system; Jaspers refuses to cooperate *as an individual* with

the history which Marxists are making. Kierkegaard realized some progress over Hegel by affirming the *reality* of the lived; Jaspers regresses in the historical movement, for he flees from the real movement of *praxis* and takes refuge in an abstract subjectivity, whose sole aim is to achieve a certain inward *quality*.[10] This ideology of withdrawal expressed quite well only yesterday the attitude of a certain Germany fixed on its two defeats and that of a certain European bourgeoisie which wants to justify its privileges by an aristocracy of the soul, to find refuge from its objectivity in an exquisite subjectivity, and to let itself be fascinated by an ineffable present so as not to see its future. Philosophically this soft, devious thought is only a survival; it holds no great interest. But it is one more Existentialism which has developed at the margin of Marxism and not against it. It is Marx with whom we claim kinship, and Marx of whom I wish to speak now.

By its *actual* presence, a philosophy transforms the structures of Knowledge, stimulates ideas; even when it defines the practical perspectives of an exploited class, it polarizes the culture of the ruling classes and changes it. Marx wrote that the ideas of the dominant class are the dominant ideas. He is *absolutely* right. In 1925, when I was twenty years old, there was no chair of Marxism at the University, and Communist students were very careful not to appeal to Marxism or even to mention it in their examinations; had they done so, they would have failed. The horror of dialectic was such that Hegel himself was unknown to us. Of course, they allowed us to read Marx; they even advised us to read him; one had to know him "in order to refute him." But without the Hegelian tradition, without Marxist teachers, without any planned program of study, without the instruments of thought, our generation, like the preceding ones and like that which followed, was wholly ignorant of historical materialism.[11] On the other hand, they taught us Aristotelian and mathematical logic in great detail. It was at about this time that I read *Capital* and *German Ideology*. I found everything

[10] Jaspers gives the name "existence" to this quality which is at once immanent (since it extends throughout our lived subjectivity) and transcendent (since it remains beyond our reach).

[11] This explains why intellectual Marxists of my age (whether Communists or not) are such poor dialecticians; they have returned, without knowing it, to mechanistic materialism.

perfectly clear, and I really understood absolutely nothing. To understand is to change, to go beyond oneself. This reading did not change me. By contrast, what did begin to change me was the *reality* of Marxism, the heavy presence on my horizon of the masses of workers, an enormous, somber body which *lived* Marxism, which *practiced* it, and which at a distance exercised an irresistible attraction on petit bourgeois intellectuals. When we read this philosophy in books, it enjoyed no privilege in our eyes. A priest, who has just written a voluminous and very interesting work on Marx, calmly states in the opening pages: "It is possible to study [his] thought just as securely as one studies that of any other philosopher or any other sociologist." [12] That was exactly what we believed. So long as this thought appeared to us through written words, we remained "objective." We said to ourselves: "Here are the conceptions of a German intellectual who lived in London in the middle of the last century." But when it was presented as a real determination of the Proletariat and as the profound meaning of its acts—for itself and in itself—then Marxism attracted us irresistibly without our knowing it, and it put all our acquired culture out of shape. I repeat, it was not the idea which unsettled us; nor was it the condition of the worker, which we knew abstractly but which we had not experienced. No, it was the two joined together. It was—as we would have said then in our idealist jargon even as we were breaking with idealism—the Proletariat as the incarnation and vehicle of an idea. And I believe that we must here complete Marx's statement: When the rising class becomes conscious of itself, this self-consciousness acts at a distance upon intellectuals and makes the ideas in their heads disintegrate. We rejected the official idealism in the name of "the tragic sense of life." [13] This Proletariat, far off, invisible, inaccessible, but conscious and acting, furnished the proof—obscurely for most of us—that not *all* conflicts had been resolved. We had been brought up in bourgeois humanism, and this optimistic humanism was shattered when we vaguely perceived around our town the immense crowd of "sub-men con-

[12] Calvez: *La Pensée de Karl Marx* (Le Seuil).

[13] This phrase was made popular by the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno. Of course, this tragic sense had nothing in common with the true conflicts of our period.

scious of their subhumanity." But we sensed this shattering in a way that was still idealist and individualist.

At about that time, the writers whom we loved explained to us that existence is a *scandal*. What interested us, however, was real men with their labors and their troubles. We cried out for a philosophy which would account for everything, and we did not perceive that it existed already and that it was precisely this philosophy which provoked in us this demand. At that time one book enjoyed a great success among us—Jean Wahl's *Toward the Concrete*. Yet we were disappointed by this "toward." The total concrete was what we wanted to leave behind us; the absolute concrete was what we wanted to achieve. Still the work pleased us, for it embarrassed idealism by discovering in the universe paradoxes, ambiguities, conflicts, still unresolved. We learned to turn pluralism (that concept of the Right) against the optimistic, monistic idealism of our professors—in the name of a Leftist thought which was still ignorant of itself. Enthusiastically we adopted all those doctrines which divided men into watertight groups. "Petit bourgeois" democrats, we rejected racism, but we liked to think that "primitive mentality," the universe of the child and the madman, remained entirely impenetrable to us. Under the influence of war and the Russian Revolution, we offered violence—only theoretically, of course—in opposition to the sweet dreams of our professors. It was a wretched violence (insults, brawls, suicides, murders, irreparable catastrophes) which risked leading us to fascism; but in our eyes it had the advantage of highlighting the contradictions of reality. Thus Marxism as "a philosophy which had become the world" wrenched us away from the defunct culture of a bourgeoisie which was barely subsisting on its past. We plunged blindly down the dangerous path of a pluralist realism concerned with man and things in their "concrete" existence. Yet we remained within the compass of "dominating ideas." Although we wanted to know man in his real life, we did not as yet have the idea of considering him first a worker who produces the conditions of his life. For a long time we confused the *total* and the *individual*. Pluralism, which had served us so well against M. Brunschvicg's idealism, prevented us from understanding the dialectical totalization. It pleased us to decry essences and artificially isolated types rather than to recon-

stitute the synthetic movement of a truth that had "become." Political events led us to employ the schema of the "class struggle" as a sort of grid, more convenient that veridical; but it took the whole bloody history of this half century to make us grasp the reality of the class struggle and to situate us in a split society. It was the war which shattered the worn structures of our thought—War, Occupation, Resistance, the years which followed. We wanted to fight at the side of the working class; we finally understood that the concrete is history and dialectical action. We had repudiated pluralist realism only to have found it again among the fascists, and we discovered the world.

Why then has "Existentialism" preserved its autonomy? Why has it not simply dissolved in Marxism?

Lukacs believed that he had answered this question in a small book called *Existentialism and Marxism*. According to him, bourgeois intellectuals have been forced "to abandon the method of idealism while safeguarding its results and its foundations; hence the historical necessity of a 'third path' (between materialism and idealism) in actuality and in the bourgeois consciousness during the imperialistic period." I shall show later the havoc which this wish to conceptualize *a priori* has wrought at the center of Marxism. Here let us simply observe that Lukacs fails absolutely to account for the principal fact: we were convinced *at one and the same time* that historical materialism furnished the only valid interpretation of history and that Existentialism remained the only concrete approach to reality. I do not pretend to deny the contradictions in this attitude. I simply assert that Lukacs does not even suspect it. Many intellectuals, many students, have lived and still live with the tension of this double demand. How does this come about? It is due to a circumstance which Lukacs knew perfectly well but which he could not at that time even mention: Marxism, after drawing us to it as the moon draws the tides, after transforming all our ideas, after liquidating the categories of our bourgeois thought, abruptly left us stranded. It did not satisfy our need to understand. In the particular situation in which we were placed, it no longer had anything new to teach us, because it had come to a stop.

Marxism stopped. Precisely because this philosophy wants to

change the world, because its aim is "philosophy-becoming-the-world," because it is and wants to be *practical,* there arose within it a veritable schism which rejected theory on one side and *praxis* on the other. From the moment the U.S.S.R., encircled and alone, undertook its gigantic effort at industrialization, Marxism found itself unable to bear the shock of these new struggles, the practical necessities and the mistakes which are always inseparable from them. At this period of withdrawal (for the U.S.S.R.) and of ebb tide (for the revolutionary proletariats), the ideology itself was subordinated to a double need: security (that is, unity) and the construction of socialism *inside* the U.S.S.R. Concrete thought must be born from *praxis* and must turn back upon it in order to clarify it, not by chance and without rules, but—as in all sciences and all techniques—in conformity with principles. Now the Party leaders, bent on pushing the integration of the group to the limit, feared that the free process of truth, with all the discussions and all the conflicts which it involves, would break the unity of combat; they reserved for themselves the right to define the line and to interpret the event. In addition, out of fear that the experience might not provide its own clarities, that it might put into question certain of their guiding ideas and might contribute to "weakening the ideological struggle," they put the doctrine out of reach. The separation of theory and practice resulted in transforming the latter into an empiricism without principles; the former into a pure, fixed knowledge. On the other hand, the economic planning imposed by a bureaucracy unwilling to recognize its mistakes became thereby a violence done to reality. And since the future production of a nation was determined in offices, often outside its own territory, this violence had as its counterpart an absolute idealism. Men and things had to yield to ideas—*a priori;* experience, when it did not verify the predictions, could only be wrong. Budapest's subway was real in Rakosi's head. If Budapest's subsoil did not allow him to construct the subway, this was because the subsoil was counter-revolutionary. Marxism, as a philosophical interpretation of man and of history, necessarily had to reflect the preconceptions of the planned economy.

This fixed image of idealism and of violence did idealistic violence to facts. For years the Marxist intellectual believed that he

served his party by violating experience, by overlooking embarrassing details, by grossly simplifying the data, and above all, by conceptualizing the event *before* having studied it. And I do not mean to speak only of Communists, but of all the others—fellow travelers, Trotskyites, and Trotsky sympathizers—for they have been *created* by their sympathy for the Communist Party or by their opposition to it. On November 4, 1956, at the time of the second Soviet intervention in Hungary, each group already had its mind made up before it possessed any information on the situation. It had decided in advance whether it was witnessing an act of aggression on the part of the Russian bureaucracy against the democracy of Workers' Committees, with a revolt of the masses against the bureaucratic system, or with a counterrevolutionary attempt which Soviet moderation had known how to check. Later there was news, a great deal of news; but I have not heard it said that even one Marxist changed his opinion.

Among the interpretations which I have just mentioned, there is one which shows the method in all its nakedness, that which reduces the facts in Hungary to a "Soviet act of aggression against the democracy of Workers' Committees." [14] It is obvious that the Workers' Committees are a democratic institution; one can even maintain that they bear within them the future of the socialist society. But this does not alter the fact that they did not exist in Hungary at the time of the first Soviet intervention; and their appearance during the Insurrection was much too brief and too troubled for us to be able to speak of an organized democracy. No matter. There were Workers' Committees; a Soviet intervention took place. Starting from there, Marxist idealism proceeds to two simultaneous operations: conceptualization and passage to the limit. They push the empirical notion to the perfection of the type, the germ to its total development. At the same time they reject the equivocal givens of experience; these could only lead one astray. We will find ourselves then in the presence of a typical contradiction between two Platonic ideas: on the one side, the wavering policy of the U.S.S.R. gave way to the rigorous and predictable action of that entity, "the Soviet Bureaucracy"; on the other side, the Workers' Committees disappeared before that other entity, "the

[14] Maintained by former Trotskyites.

direct Democracy." I shall call these two objects "general particularities"; they are made to pass for particular, historical realities when we ought not to see in them anything more than the purely formal unity of abstract, universal relations. The process of making them into fetishes will be complete when each one is endowed with real powers: the Democracy of Workers' Committees holds within itself the absolute negation of the Bureaucracy, which reacts by crushing its adversary.

Now there can be no doubt that the fruitfulness of living Marxism stemmed in part from its way of approaching experience. Marx was convinced that facts are never isolated appearances, that if they come into being together, it is always within the higher unity of a whole, that they are bound to each other by internal relations, and that the presence of one profoundly modifies the nature of the other. Consequently, Marx approached the study of the revolution of February, 1848, or Louis Napoleon Bonaparte's *coup d'état* with a synthetic intent; he saw in these events totalities produced and at the same time split apart by their internal contradictions. Of course, the physicist's hypothesis, before it has been confirmed by experimentation, is also an interpretation of experience; it rejects empiricism simply because it is mute. But the constitutive schema of this hypothesis is universalizing, not totalizing. It determines a relation, a function, and not a concrete totality. The Marxist approaches the historical process with universalizing and totalizing schemata. Naturally the totalization was not made by chance. The theory had determined the choice of perspective and the order of the conditioning factors; it studied each particular process within the framework of a general system in evolution. But in no case, in Marx's own work, does this putting in perspective claim to prevent or to render useless the appreciation of the process as a *unique* totality. When, for example, he studies the brief and tragic history of the Republic of 1848, he does not limit himself—as would be done today—to stating that the republican petite bourgeoisie betrayed its ally, the Proletariat. On the contrary, he tries to account for this tragedy in its detail and in the aggregate. If he subordinates anecdotal facts to the totality (of a movement, of an attitude), he also seeks to discover the totality by means of the facts. In other words, he gives to each event, in addition to its particular significa-

tion, the role of being revealing. Since the ruling principle of the inquiry is the search for the synthetic ensemble, each fact, once established, is questioned and interpreted as part of a whole. It is on the basis of *the fact,* through the study of its lacks and its "over-significations," that one determines, by virtue of a hypothesis, the totality at the heart of which the fact will recover its truth. Thus living Marxism is heuristic; its principles and its prior knowledge appear as regulative in relation to its concrete research. In the work of Marx we never find entities. Totalities (e.g., "the petite bourgeoisie" of the *18 Brumaire*) are living; they furnish their own definitions within the framework of the research.[15] Otherwise we could not understand the importance which Marxists attach (even today) to "the analysis" of a situation. It goes without saying that this analysis is not enough and that it is but the first moment in an effort at synthetic reconstruction. But it is apparent also that the analysis is indispensable to the later reconstruction of the total structures.

[15] The concept of "the petite bourgeoisie" exists in Marxist philosophy, of course, well before the study of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état.* But this is because the petite bourgeoisie itself had already existed as a class for a long time. What is important is the fact that it evolves with history and that in 1848 it presents unique characteristics which the concept cannot derive from itself. We will see that Marx goes back to the general traits which defined it as a class and at the same time—in those terms and in the light of experience—he determines the specific traits which determined it as a unique reality in 1848. To take another example, see how he tries in 1853, in a series of articles (*The British Rule in India*), to portray the peculiar quality of Hindustan. Maximilien Rubel in his excellent book quotes this curious passage (so shocking to our contemporary Marxists): "This strange combination of Italy and Ireland, of a world of pleasure and a world of suffering, is anticipated in the old religious traditions of Hindustan, in that religion of sensual exuberance and savage asceticism. . . ." (Rubel: *Karl Marx,* p. 302. The quotation from Marx appeared June 25, 1853, under the title *On India.*) Certainly we can find behind these words the true concepts and method: the social structure and the geographical aspect—that is what recalls Italy; English colonization—that is what recalls Ireland; etc. No matter. He gives a *reality* to these words—pleasure, suffering, sensual exuberance, and savage asceticism. Better yet, he shows the actual situation of Hindustan "anticipated" (*before the English*) by its old religious traditions. Whether Hindustan is actually this or something else matters little to us; what counts here is the synthetic view which *gives life* to the objects of the analysis.

Marxist voluntarism, which likes to speak of analysis, has reduced this operation to a simple ceremony. There is no longer any question of studying facts within the general perspective of Marxism so as to enrich our understanding and to clarify action. Analysis consists solely in getting rid of detail, in forcing the signification of certain events, in denaturing facts or even in inventing a nature for them in order to discover it later underneath them, as their substance, as unchangeable, fetishized "synthetic notions." The open concepts of Marxism have closed in. They are no longer *keys,* interpretive schemata; they are posited for themselves as an already totalized knowledge. To use Kantian terms—Marxism makes out of these particularized, fetishized types, constitutive concepts of experience. The real content of these typical concepts is always *past Knowledge;* but today's Marxist makes of it an eternal knowledge. His sole concern, at the moment of analysis, will be to "place" these entities. The more he is convinced that they represent truth *a priori,* the less fussy he will be about proof. The Kerstein Amendment, the appeals of Radio Free Europe, rumors—these are sufficient for the French Communists to "place" the entity "world imperialism" at the origin of the events in Hungary. The totalizing investigation has given way to a Scholasticism of the totality. The heuristic principle—"to search for the whole in its parts"—has become the terrorist practice [16] of "liquidating the particularity." It is not by chance that Lukacs—Lukacs who so often violates history—has found in 1956 the best definition of this frozen Marxism. Twenty years of practice give him all the authority necessary to call this pseudo-philosophy *a voluntarist idealism.*

Today social and historical experience falls outside of Knowledge. Bourgeois concepts just manage to revive and quickly break down; those which survive lack any foundation. The real attainments of American Sociology cannot hide its theoretic uncertainty. Psychoanalysis, after a spectacular beginning, has stood still. It knows a great many details, but it lacks any firm foundation. Marxism possesses theoretical bases, it embraces all human activity; but it no longer *knows* anything. Its concepts are *dictates;* its goal is no longer to increase what it knows but to be itself constituted *a priori*

[16] At one time this intellectual terror corresponded to "the physical liquidation" of particular people.

as an absolute Knowledge. In view of this twofold ignorance, Existentialism has been able to return and to maintain itself because it reaffirmed the reality of men as Kierkegaard asserted his own reality against Hegel. However, the Dane rejected the Hegelian conception of man and of the real. Existentialism and Marxism, on the contrary, aim at the same object; but Marxism has reabsorbed man into the idea, and Existentialism seeks him everywhere *where he is,* at his work, in his home, in the street. We certainly do not claim—as Kierkegaard did—that this real man is unknowable. We say only that he is not known. If for the time being he escapes Knowledge, it is because the only concepts at our disposal for understanding him are borrowed either from the idealism of the Right or from the idealism of the Left. We are careful not to confuse these two idealisms: the former merits its name by the *content* of its concepts, and the latter by the *use* which today it makes of its concepts. It is true also that among the masses Marxist *practice* does not reflect, or only slightly reflects, the sclerosis of its theory. But it is precisely the conflict between revolutionary action and the Scholastic justification of this action which prevents Communist man—in socialist countries as in bourgeois countries—from achieving any clear self-consciousness. One of the most striking characteristics of our time is the fact that history is made without self-awareness. No doubt someone will say this has always been the case; and this was true up until the second half of the last century —that is, until Marx. But what has made the force and richness of Marxism is the fact that it has been the most radical attempt to clarify the historical process in its totality. For the last twenty years, on the contrary, its shadow has obscured history; this is because it has ceased to live *with history* and because it attempts, through a bureaucratic conservatism, to reduce change to identity.[17]

[17] I have already expressed my opinion on the Hungarian tragedy, and I shall not discuss the matter again. From the point of view of what concerns us here, it matters little *a priori* that the Communist commentators believed that they had to justify the Soviet intervention. What is really heartbreaking is the fact that their "analyses" totally suppressed the originality of the Hungarian fact. Yet there is no doubt that an insurrection at Budapest a dozen years after the war, less than five years after the death of Stalin, must present very particular characteristics. What do our "schematizers" do? They lay stress on the faults of the Party but without defining them. These inde-

Yet we must be clear about all this. This sclerosis does not correspond to a normal aging. It is produced by a worldwide combination of circumstances of a particular type. Far from being exhausted, Marxism is still very young, almost in its infancy; it has scarcely begun to develop. It remains, therefore, the philosophy of our time. We cannot go beyond it because we have not gone beyond the circumstances which engendered it. Our thoughts, whatever they may be, can be formed only upon this humus; they must be contained within the framework which it furnishes for them or be lost in the void or retrogress. Existentialism, like Marxism, addresses itself to experience in order to discover there concrete syntheses; it can conceive of these syntheses only within a moving, dialectical totalization which is nothing else but history or—from the strictly cultural point of view which we have adopted here—"philosophy-becoming-the-world." For us, truth is something which becomes, it *has* and *will have* become. It is a totalization which is forever being totalized. Particular facts do not signify anything; they are neither true nor false so long as they are not related, through the mediation of various partial totalities, to the totalization in progress.

Let us go further. We agree with Garaudy when he writes (*Humanité,* May 17, 1955): "Marxism forms today the system of coordinates which alone permits it to situate and to define a thought in any domain whatsoever—from political economy to physics, from history to ethics." And we should agree all the more

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terminate faults assume an abstract and eternal character which wrenches them from the historical context so as to make of them a universal entity; it is "human error." The writers indicate the presence of reactionary elements, but without showing their Hungarian *reality*. Suddenly these reactionaries pass over into eternal Reaction; they are brothers of the counterrevolutionaries of 1793, and their only distinctive trait is the will to injure. Finally, those commentators present world imperialism as an inexhaustible, formless force, whose essence does not vary regardless of its point of application. They construct an interpretation which serves as a skeleton key to everything—out of three ingredients: errors, the local-reaction-which-profits-from-popular-discontent, and the exploitation-of-this-situation-by-world-imperialism. This interpretation can be applied as well or as badly to all insurrections, including the disturbances in Vendée or at Lyon in 1793, by merely putting "aristocracy" in place of "imperialism." In short, nothing new has happened. That is what had to be demonstrated.

readily if he had extended his statement (but this was not his subject) to the actions of individuals and masses, to specific works, to modes of life, to labor, to feelings, to the particular evolution of an institution or a character. To go further, we are also in full agreement with Engels when he wrote in that letter which furnished Plekhanov the occasion for a famous attack against Bernstein: "There does not exist, as one would like to imagine now and then, simply for convenience, any effect produced automatically by the economic situation. On the contrary, it is men themselves who make their history, but within a given environment which conditions them and on the basis of real, prior conditions among which economic conditions—no matter how much influenced they may be by other political and ideological conditions—are nevertheless, in the final analysis, the determining conditions, constituting from one end to the other the guiding thread which alone puts us in a position to understand." It is already evident that we do not conceive of economic conditions as the simple, static structure of an unchangeable society; it is the contradictions within them which form the driving force of history. It is amusing that Lukacs, in the work which I have already quoted, believed he was distinguishing himself from us by recalling that Marxist definition of materialism: "the primacy of existence over consciousness"—whereas Existentialism, as its name sufficiently indicates, makes of this primacy the object of its fundamental affirmation.[18]

[18] The *methodological* principle which holds that certitude begins with reflection in no way contradicts the *anthropological* principle which defines the concrete person by his materiality. For us, reflection is not reduced to the simple immanence of idealist subjectivism; it is a point of departure only if it throws us back immediately among things and men, in the world. The only theory of knowledge which can be valid today is one which is founded on that truth of microphysics: the experimenter is a part of the experimental system. This is the only position which allows us to get rid of all idealist illusion, the only one which shows the real man in the midst of the real world. But this realism necessarily implies a reflective point of departure; that is, the *revelation* of a situation is effected in and through the *praxis* which changes it. We do not hold that this first act of becoming conscious of the situation is the originating source of an action; we see in it a necessary moment of the action itself—the action, *in the course of its accomplishment,* provides its own clarification. That does not prevent this clarification from appearing in and by means of the attainment of awareness on the part of the agents; and this in turn necessarily

implies that one must develop a theory of consciousness. Yet the theory of knowledge continues to be the weak point in Marxism. When Marx writes: "The materialist conception of the world signifies simply the conception of nature as it is without any foreign addition," he makes himself into an *objective observation* and claims to contemplate nature as it is absolutely. Having stripped away all subjectivity and having assimilated himself into pure objective truth, he walks in a world of objects inhabited by object-men. By contrast, when Lenin speaks of our consciousness, he writes: "Consciousness is only the reflection of being, at best an approximately accurate reflection"; and by a single stroke he removes from himself the right to write what he is writing. In both cases it is a matter of suppressing subjectivity: with Marx, we are placed beyond it; with Lenin, on this side of it.

These two positions contradict each other. How can the "approximately accurate reflection" become the source of *materialistic rationalism?* The game is played on two levels: there is in Marxism a constituting consciousness which asserts *a priori* the rationality of the world (and which, consequently, falls into idealism); this constituting consciousness determines the constituted consciousness of particular men as a simple reflection (which ends up in a skeptical idealism). Both of these conceptions amount to breaking man's real relation with history, since in the first, knowing is pure theory, a nonsituated observing, and in the second, it is a simple passivity. In the latter there is no longer any experimenting, there is only a skeptical empiricism; man vanishes and Hume's challenge is not taken up. In the former the experimenter transcends the experimental system. And let no one try to tie one to the other by a "dialectical theory of the reflection"; the two concepts are essentially *antidialectical.* When knowing is made apodictic, and when it is constituted against all possible questioning without ever defining its scope or its rights, then it is cut off from the world and becomes a formal system. When it is reduced to a pure psycho-physiological determination, it loses its primary quality, which is its relation to the object, in order to become itself a pure object of knowing. No mediation can link Marxism as a declaration of principles and apodictic truths to psycho-physiological reflection (or "dialectic"). These two conceptions of knowing (dogmatism and the knowing-dyad) are both of them *pre-Marxist.* In the movement of Marxist "analyses" and especially in the process of totalization, just as in Marx's remarks on the *practical* aspect of truth and on the general relations of theory and *praxis,* it would be easy to discover the rudiments of a *realistic* epistemology which has never been developed. But what we can and ought to construct on the basis of these scattered observations is a theory which *situates* knowing *in the world* (as the theory of the reflection attempts awkwardly to do) and which determines it in its *negativity* (that negativity which Stalinist dogmatism pushes to the absolute and which it transforms into a negation). Only then will it be understood that knowing is not a knowing of ideas but a practical knowing *of things;* then it will be possible to suppress the *reflection* as a useless and misleading intermediary. Then we will be able to account for the thought which is lost and alienated in the course of action so that it may be rediscovered by and in the action itself. But what are we to call this situated negativity, as a moment

To be still more explicit, we support unreservedly that formulation in *Capital* by which Marx means to define his "materialism": "The mode of production of material life generally dominates the development of social, political, and intellectual life." We cannot conceive of this conditioning in any form except that of a dialectical movement (contradictions, surpassing, totalizations). M. Rubel criticizes me for not making any allusion to this "Marxist materialism" in the article I wrote in 1946, "Materialism and Revolution." But he himself supplies the reason for this omission. "It is true that this author is directing his comments at Engels rather than at Marx." Yes, and even more at contemporary French Marxists. But Marx's statement seems to me to point to a factual evidence which we cannot go beyond *so long as* the transformations of social relations and technical progress have not freed man from the yoke of scarcity. We are all acquainted with the passage in which Marx alludes to that far-off time: "This reign of freedom does not begin in fact until the time when the work imposed by necessity and external finality shall cease; it is found, therefore, beyond the sphere of material production proper" (*Capital,* III, p. 873). As soon as there will exist *for everyone* a margin of *real* freedom beyond the production of life, Marxism will have lived out its span; a philosophy of freedom will take its place. But we have no means, no intellectual instrument, no concrete experience which allows us to conceive of this freedom or of this philosophy.

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These considerations enable us to understand why we can at the

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of *praxis* and as a pure relation to things themselves, if not exactly "consciousness"?

There are two ways to fall into idealism: the one consists of dissolving the real in subjectivity; the other in denying all real subjectivity in the interests of objectivity. The truth is that subjectivity is neither everything nor nothing; it represents a moment in the objective process (that in which externality is internalized), and this moment is perpetually eliminated only to be perpetually reborn. Now, each of these ephemeral moments—which rise up in the course of human history and which are never either the first or the last—is lived as a *point of departure* by the subject of history. "Class-consciousness" is not the simple lived contradiction which objectively characterizes the class considered; it is that contradiction already surpassed by *praxis* and thereby preserved and denied all at once. But it is precisely this revealing negativity, this distance within immediate proximity, which simultaneously constitutes what Existentialism calls "consciousness *of* the object" and "non-thetic self-consciousness."

same time declare that we are in profound agreement with Marxist philosophy and yet for the present maintain the autonomy of the existential ideology. There is no doubt, indeed, that Marxism appears today to be the only possible anthropology which can be at once historical and structural. It is the only one which at the same time takes man in his totality—that is, in terms of the materiality of his condition. Nobody can propose to it another point of departure, for this would be to offer to it *another man* as the object of its study. It is *inside* the movement of Marxist thought that we discover a flaw of such a sort that despite itself Marxism tends to eliminate the questioner from his investigation and to make of the questioned the object of an absolute Knowledge. The very notions which Marxist research employs to describe our historical society —exploitation, alienation, fetishizing, reification, etc.—are precisely those which most immediately refer to existential structures. The very notion of *praxis* and that of dialectic—inseparably bound together—are contradictory to the intellectualist idea of a knowledge. And to come to the most important point, *labor,* as man's reproduction of his life, can hold no meaning if its fundamental structure is not to pro-ject. In view of this default—which pertains to the historical development and not to the actual principles of the doctrine—Existentialism, at the heart of Marxism and taking the same givens, the same Knowledge, as its point of departure, must attempt in its turn—at least as an experiment—the dialectical interpretation of History. It puts nothing in question except a mechanistic determinism which is not exactly Marxist and which has been introduced from the outside into this total philosophy. Existentialism, too, wants to situate man in his class and in the conflicts which oppose him to other classes, starting with the mode and the relations of production. But it can approach this "situation" in terms of *existence*—that is, of comprehension. It makes itself the questioned and the question as questioner; it does not, as Kierkegaard did apropos of Hegel, set the irrational singularity of the individual in opposition to universal Knowledge. But into this very Knowledge and into the universality of concepts, it wants to reintroduce the unsurpassable singularity of the human adventure.

Thus the comprehension of existence is presented as the human foundation of Marxist anthropology. Nevertheless, we must be-

ware here of a confusion heavy with consequences. In fact, in the order of Knowledge, what we know concerning the principle or the foundations of a scientific structure, even when it has come—as is ordinarily the case—later than the empirical determinations, is set forth first; and one deduces from it the determinations of Knowledge in the same way that one constructs a building after having secured its foundations. But this is because the foundation is itself a knowing; and if one can deduce from it certain propositions already guaranteed by experience, this is because one has induced it in terms of them as the most general hypothesis. In contrast, the foundation of Marxism, as a historical, structural anthropology, is man himself inasmuch as human existence and the comprehension of the human are inseparable. Historically Marxist Knowledge produces its foundation at a certain moment of its development, and this foundation is presented in a disguised form. It does not appear as the practical foundations of the theory, but as that which, on principle, pushes forward all theoretical knowing. Thus the singularity of existence is presented in Kierkegaard as that which on principle is kept outside the Hegelian system (that is, outside total Knowledge), as that which can in no way be *thought* but only *lived* in the act of faith. The dialectical procedure to reintegrate existence (which is never *known*) as a foundation at the heart of Knowledge could not be attempted then, since neither of the current attitudes—an idealist Knowledge, a spiritual existence—could lay claim to concrete actualization. These two terms outlined abstractly the future contradiction. And the development of anthropological knowing could not lead then to the synthesis of these formal positions: the movement of ideas—as the movement of society—had first to produce Marxism as the only possible form of a really concrete Knowledge. And as we indicated at the beginning, Marx's own Marxism, while indicating the dialectical opposition between knowing and being, contained implicitly the demand for an existential foundation for the theory. Furthermore, in order for notions like reification and alienation to assume their full meaning, it would have been necessary for the questioner and the questioned to be made one. What must be the nature of human relations in order for these relations to be capable of appearing in certain definite societies as the relations of things to each other? If the

reification of human relations is possible, it is because these relations, even if reified, are fundamentally distinct from the relations of things. What kind of practical organism is this which reproduces its life by its work so that its work and ultimately its very reality are alienated; that is, so that they, *as others,* turn back upon him and determine him? But before Marxism, itself a product of the social conflict, could turn to these problems, it had to assume fully its role as a practical philosophy—that is, as a theory clarifying social and political *praxis.* The result is a profound *lack* within contemporary Marxism; the use of the notions mentioned earlier —and many others—refers to a comprehension of human reality which is missing. And this lack is not—as some Marxists declare today—a localized void, a hole in the construction of Knowledge. It is inapprehensible and yet everywhere present; it is a general anemia.

Doubtless this *practical* anemia becomes an anemia in the Marxist man—that is, in us, men of the twentieth century, inasmuch as the unsurpassable framework of Knowledge is Marxism; and inasmuch as this Marxism clarifies our individual and collective *praxis,* it therefore determines us in our existence. About 1949 numerous posters covered the walls in Warsaw: "Tuberculosis slows down production." They were put there as the result of some decision on the part of the government, and this decision originated in a very good intention. But their content shows more clearly than anything else the extent to which man has been eliminated from an anthropology which wants to be pure knowledge. Tuberculosis is an object of a practical Knowledge: the physician learns to know it in order to cure it; the Party determines its importance in Poland by statistics. Other mathematical calculations connecting these with production statistics (quantitative variations in production for each industrial group in proportion to the number of cases of tuberculosis) will suffice to obtain a law of the type $y = f(x)$, in which tuberculosis plays the role of independent variable. But this law, the same one which could be read on the propaganda posters, reveals a new and double alienation by totally eliminating the tubercular man, by refusing to him even the elementary role of *mediator* between the disease and the number of manufactured products. In a socialist society, at a certain moment in its develop-

ment, the worker is alienated from his production; in the theoretical-practical order, the human foundation of anthropology is submerged in Knowledge.

It is precisely this expulsion of man, his exclusion from Marxist Knowledge, which resulted in the renascence of Existentialist thought outside the historical totalization of Knowledge. Human science is frozen in the nonhuman, and human-reality seeks to understand itself outside of science. But this time the opposition comes from those who directly demand their synthetic transcendence. Marxism will degenerate into a nonhuman anthropology if it does not reintegrate man into itself as its foundation. But this comprehension, which is nothing other than existence itself, is disclosed at the same time by the historical movement of Marxism, by the concepts which indirectly clarify it (alienation, etc.), and by the new alienations which give birth to the contradictions of socialist society and which reveal to it its abandonment; that is, the incommensurability of existence and practical Knowledge. The movement can *think* itself only in Marxist terms and can *comprehend* itself only as an alienated existence, as a human-reality made into a thing. The moment which will surpass this opposition must reintegrate comprehension into Knowledge as its nontheoretical foundation.

In other words, the foundation of anthropology is man himself, not as the object of practical Knowledge, but as a practical organism producing Knowledge as a moment of its *praxis*. And the reintegration of man as a concrete existence into the core of anthropology, as its constant support, appears necessarily as a stage in the process of philosophy's "becoming-the-world." In this sense the foundation of anthropology cannot precede it (neither historically nor logically). If existence, in its free comprehension of itself, preceded the awareness of alienation or of exploitation, it would be necessary to suppose that the free development of the practical organism historically preceded its present fall and captivity. (And if this were established, the historical precedence would scarcely advance us in our comprehension, since the retrospective study of vanished societies is made today with the enlightenment furnished by techniques for reconstruction and by means of the alienations which enchain us.) Or, if one insisted on a logical

priority, it would be necessary to suppose that the freedom of the project could be recovered in its full reality *underneath* the alienations of our society and that one could move dialectically from the concrete existence which understands its freedom to the various alterations which distort it in present society. This hypothesis is absurd. To be sure, man can be enslaved only if he is free. But for the historical man who *knows* himself and *comprehends* himself, this practical freedom is grasped only as the permanent, concrete condition of his servitude; that is, across that servitude and by means of it as that which makes it possible, as its foundation. Thus Marxist Knowledge bears on the alienated man; but if it doesn't want to make a fetish of its knowing and to dissolve man in the process of knowing his alienations, then it is not enough to describe the working of capital or the system of colonization. It is necessary that the questioner understand how the questioned—that is, himself—*exists his alienation,* how he surpasses it and is alienated in this very surpassing. It is necessary that his very thought should at every instant surpass the intimate contradiction which unites the comprehension of man-as-agent with the knowing of man-as-object and that it forge new concepts, new determinations of Knowledge which emerge from the existential comprehension and which regulate the movement of their contents by its dialectical procedure. Yet this comprehension—as a living movement of the practical organism—can take place only within a concrete situation, insofar as theoretical Knowledge illuminates and interprets this situation.

Thus the autonomy of existential studies results necessarily from the negative qualities of Marxists (and not from Marxism itself). So long as the doctrine does not recognize its anemia, so long as it founds its Knowledge upon a dogmatic metaphysics (a dialectic of Nature) instead of seeking its support in the comprehension of the living man, so long as it rejects as irrational those ideologies which wish, as Marx did, to separate being from Knowledge and, in anthropology, to found the knowing of man on human existence, Existentialism will follow its own path of study. This means that it will attempt to clarify the givens of Marxist Knowledge by indirect knowing (that is, as we have seen, by words which regressively denote existential structures), and to engender within the frame-

work of Marxism a veritable *comprehensive knowing* which will rediscover man in the social world and which will follow him in his *praxis*—or, if you prefer, in the project which throws him toward the social possibles in terms of a defined situation. Existentialism will appear, therefore, as a fragment of the system, which has fallen outside of Knowledge. From the day that Marxist thought will have taken on the human dimension (that is, the existential project) as the foundation of anthropological Knowledge, Existentialism will no longer have any reason for being. Absorbed, surpassed and conserved by the totalizing movement of philosophy, it will cease to be a particular inquiry and will become the foundation of all inquiry. The comments which we have made in the course of the present essay are directed—to the modest limit of our capabilities —toward hastening the moment of that dissolution.

ALBERT CAMUS

Albert Camus (1913–1960) received a degree in philosophy from the University of Algiers while engaging in newspaper work, writing and acting in plays with a "little theater" group. In Occupied France, he joined in the Resistance movement and edited the underground newspaper, *Combat*.

Two of his major books appeared in 1942: *The Stranger*, a novel, and *The Myth of Sisyphus*, a philosophical essay. Then came *Letters to a German Friend* (1945), *The Plague* (1947), *The Rebel* (1951), *The Fall* (1957), and a collection of stories, *Exile and the Kingdom* (1957). His most important journalistic pieces were republished in his three-volume *Actuelles* (1950, 1953, 1958).

Four of his plays were published in English in 1958 as *Caligula and Three Other Plays*. Camus won the 1957 Nobel Prize for Literature as a writer who "with clear-sighted earnestness illuminates the problems of the human conscience in our times." He died in an automobile accident near Sens, France.

Camus was with Sartre the most persistent critic of dialetical materialism among the French Left Existentialists. But their attitudes toward the Communist movement developed in different directions. Sartre changed from an opponent to an apostle of Marxism. Camus, on the contrary, after a sojourn in the Algerian Communist party from 1934 to 1937, kept pulling away from Marxism until he stepped forth as its adversary with the publication of *The Rebel* in 1951.

This book precipitated an irreparable rupture between Camus and Sartreans despite their association in the Resistance and the first years after Liberation. The two ornaments of Existentialist literature represented divergent tendencies not only in that French school but among the radical intellectuals of the West. Camus spoke for those disillusioned

ex-Communists who, like Koestler, Silone, Malraux and others, had turned bitterly hostile to the Soviet state and its political followers. Sartre headed those Left-wingers who strove to keep aligned with the forces of socialist revolution, even where they were led by Communists and despite the crimes of Stalinism.

These three sections from *The Rebel* are a requiem over what Camus believed were the dead hopes for the emancipation of humanity deposited in the revolutionary movement of Marx and Lenin seen in the ghastly light of Stalinism.

According to Camus, scientific socialism has turned out to be an illusion. It gave birth to an authoritarian terrorism, the negation of its predictions and promises. The power-hungry, ideologically intoxicated Promethean rebels of Russian Communism transformed themselves into Caesars and Grand Inquisitors.

They must therefore, in turn, be condemned, resisted, overthrown. "The same cry (for freedom), springing from the depths of the past, rings forever through the Scythian desert."

THE FAILING OF THE PROPHECY

Hegel haughtily brings history to an end in 1807; the disciples of Saint-Simon believe that the revolutionary convulsions of 1830 and 1848 are the last; Comte dies in 1857 preparing to climb into the pulpit and preach positivism to a humanity returned at last from the path of error. With the same blind romanticism, Marx, in his turn, prophesies the classless society and the solution of the historical mystery. Slightly more circumspect, however, he does not fix the date. Unfortunately, his prophecy also described the march of history up to the hour of fulfillment; it predicted the trend of events. The events and the facts, of course, have forgotten to arrange themselves according to the synthesis; and this already explains why it has been necessary to rally them by force. But above all, the prophecies, from the moment that they begin to betray the living

hopes of millions of men, cannot with impunity remain indeterminate. A time comes when deception transforms patient hope into furious disillusionment and when the ends, affirmed with the mania of obstinacy, demanded with ever-increasing cruelty, make obligatory the search for other means.

The revolutionary movement at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth lived, like the early Christians, in the expectation of the end of the world and the advent of the proletarian Christ. We know how persistent this sentiment was among primitive Christian communities. Even at the end of the fourth century, a bishop in proconsular Africa calculated that the world would only exist for another one hundred and one years. At the end of this period would come the kingdom of heaven, which must be merited without further delay. This sentiment is prevalent in the first century [1] and explains the indifference of the early Christians toward purely theological questions. If the advent is near, everything must be consecrated to a burning faith rather than to works and to dogma. Until Clement and Tertullian, during more than a century, Christian literature ignored theological problems and did not elaborate on the subject of works. But from the moment the advent no longer seems imminent, man must live with his faith—in other words, compromise. Then piety and the catechism appear on the scene. The evangelical advent fades into the distance; Saint Paul has come to establish dogma. The Church has incorporated the faith that has only an ardent desire for the kingdom to come. Everything had to be organized in the period, even martyrdom, of which the temporal witnesses are the monastic orders, and even the preaching, which was to be found again in the guise of the Inquisition.

A similar movement was born of the check to the revolutionary advent. The passages from Marx already cited give a fair idea of the burning hope that inspired the revolutionary spirit of the time. Despite partial setbacks, this faith never ceased to increase up to the moment when it found itself, in 1917, face to face with the partial realization of its dreams. "We are fighting for the gates of

[1] On the imminence of this event, see Mark ix, 1; xiii, 30; Matthew x, 23; xvi, 27–8; xxiv, 34; Luke ix, 26–7; xxi, 22, etc. [All notes in this selection are Camus'.]

heaven," cried Liebknecht. In 1917 the revolutionary world really believed that it had arrived before those gates. Rosa Luxemburg's prophecy was being realized. "The revolution will rise resoundingly tomorrow to its full height and, to your consternation, will announce with the sound of all its trumpets: I was, I am, I shall be." The Spartakus movement believed that it had achieved the definitive revolution because, according to Marx himself, the latter would come to pass after the Russian Revolution had been consummated by a Western revolution. After the revolution of 1917, a Soviet Germany would, in fact, have opened the gates of heaven. But the Spartakus movement is crushed, the French general strike of 1920 fails, the Italian revolutionary movement is strangled. Liebknecht then recognizes that the time is not ripe for revolution. "The period had not yet drawn to a close." But also, and now we grasp how defeat can excite vanquished faith to the point of religious ecstasy: "At the crash of economic collapse whose rumblings can already be heard, the sleeping soldiers of the proletariat will awake as at the fanfare of the Last Judgment, and the corpses of the victims of the struggle will arise and demand an accounting from those who are bowed down with curses." While awaiting these events, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg are assassinated, and Germany rushes toward servitude. The Russian Revolution remains isolated, living in defiance of its own system, still far from the celestial gates, with an apocalypse to organize. The advent is again postponed. Faith is intact, but it totters beneath an enormous load of problems and discoveries which Marxism had not foreseen. The new religion is once more confronted with Galilee: to preserve its faith, it must deny the sun and humiliate free man.

What does Galilee say, in fact, at this moment? What are the errors, demonstrated by history itself, of the prophecy? We know that the economic evolution of the contemporary world refutes a certain number of the postulates of Marx. If the revolution is to occur at the end of two parallel movements, the unlimited shrinking of capital and the unlimited expansion of the proletariat, it will not occur or ought not to have occurred. Capital and proletariat have both been equally unfaithful to Marx. The tendency observed in industrial England of the nineteenth century has, in certain cases, changed its course, and in others become more complex. Economic

crises, which should have occurred with increasing frequency, have, on the contrary, become more sporadic: capitalism has learned the secrets of planned production and has contributed on its own part to the growth of the Moloch State. Moreover, with the introduction of companies in which stock could be held, capital, instead of becoming increasingly concentrated, has given rise to a new category of smallholders, whose very last desire would certainly be to encourage strikes. Small enterprises have been, in many cases, destroyed by competition as Marx foresaw. But the complexity of modern production has generated a multitude of small factories around great enterprises. In 1938 Ford was able to announce that five thousand two hundred independent workshops supplied him with their products. Of course, large industries inevitably assimilated these enterprises to a certain extent. But the essential thing is that these small industrialists form an intermediary social layer which complicates the scheme that Marx imagined. Finally, the law of concentration has proved absolutely false in agricultural economy, which was treated with considerable frivolity by Marx. The hiatus is important here. In one of its aspects, the history of socialism in our times can be considered as the struggle between the proletarian movement and the peasant class. This struggle continues, on the historical plane, the nineteenth-century ideological struggle between authoritarian socialism and libertarian socialism, of which the peasant and artisan origins are quite evident. Thus Marx had, in the ideological material of his time, the elements for a study of the peasant problem. But his desire to systematize made him oversimplify everything. This particular simplification was to prove expensive for the kulaks who constituted more than five million historic exceptions to be brought, by death and deportation, within the Marxist pattern.

The same desire for simplification diverted Marx from the phenomenon of the nation in the very century of nationalism. He believed that through commerce and exchange, through the very victory of the proletariat, the barriers would fall. But it was national barriers that brought about the fall of the proletarian ideal. As a means of explaining history, the struggle between nations has been proved at least as important as the class struggle. But nations cannot be entirely explained by economics; therefore the system ignored them.

The proletariat, on its part, did not toe the line. First of all, Marx's fear is confirmed: reforms and trade unions brought about a rise in the standard of living and an amelioration in working conditions. These improvements are very far from constituting an equitable settlement of the social problem; but the miserable condition of the English textile workers in Marx's time, far from becoming general and even deteriorating, as he would have liked, has on the contrary been alleviated. Marx would not complain about this today, the equilibrium having been reestablished by another error in his predictions. It has, in fact, been possible to prove that the most efficacious revolutionary or trade-union asset has always been the existence of a working-class elite who have not been sterilized by hunger. Poverty and degeneration have never ceased to be what they were before Marx's time, and what he did not want to admit they were despite all his observations: factors contributing to servitude not to revolution. One third of working-class Germany was unemployed in 1933. Bourgeois society was then obliged to provide a means of livelihood for these unemployed, thus bringing about the situation that Marx said was essential for revolution. But it is not a good thing that future revolutionaries should be put in the situation of expecting to be fed by the State. This unnatural habit leads to others, which are even less good, and which Hitler made into doctrine.

Finally, the proletariat did not increase in numbers indefinitely. The very conditions of industrial production, which every Marxist is called upon to encourage, improved, to a considerable extent, the conditions of the middle class [2] and even created a new social stratum, the technicians. The ideal, so dear to Lenin, of a society in which the engineer would at the same time be a manual laborer is in conflict with the facts. The principal fact is that technology, like science, has reached such a degree of complication that it is not possible for a single man to understand the totality of its principles and applications. It is almost impossible, for instance, for a physicist today to have a complete understanding of the biological science of his times. Even within the realms of physics he cannot claim to be equally familiar with every branch of the subject. It is

[2] From 1920 to 1930, in a period of intense productivity, the number of metallurgical workers decreased in the United States, while the number of salesmen working for the same industry almost doubled.

the same in technology. From the moment that productivity, which is considered by both bourgeois and Marxist as a benefit in itself, is developed to enormous proportions, the division of labor, which Marx thought could have been avoided, became inevitable. Every worker has been brought to the point of performing a particular function without knowing the overall plan into which his work will fit. Those who coordinate individual work have formed, by their very function, a class whose social importance is decisive.

It is only fair to point out that this era of technocracy announced by Burnham was described, about twenty years ago, by Simone Weil in a form that can be considered complete, without drawing Burnham's unacceptable conclusions. To the two traditional forms of oppression known to humanity—oppression by armed force and by wealth—Simone Weil adds a third—oppression by occupation. "One can abolish the opposition between the buyer and the seller of work," she wrote, "without abolishing the opposition between those who dispose of the machine and those of whom the machine disposes." The Marxist plan to abolish the degrading opposition of intellectual work to manual work has come into conflict with the demands of production, which elsewhere Marx exalted. Marx undoubtedly foresaw, in *Capital,* the importance of the "manager" on the level of maximum concentration of capital. But he did not believe that this concentration of capital could survive the abolition of private property. Division of labor and private property, he said, are identical expressions. History has demonstrated the contrary. The ideal regime based on collective property could be defined, according to Lenin, as justice plus electricity. In the final analysis it is only electricity, without justice.

The idea of a mission of the proletariat has not, so far, been able to formulate itself in history: this sums up the failing of the Marxist prophecy. The failure of the Second International has proved that the proletariat was influenced by other things as well as its economic condition and that, contrary to the famous formula, it had a fatherland. The majority of the proletariat accepted or submitted to the war and collaborated, willy-nilly, in the nationalist excesses of the times. Marx intended that the working classes before they triumphed should have acquired legal and political acumen. His error lay only in believing that extreme poverty, and particu-

larly industrial poverty, could lead to political maturity. Moreover, it is quite certain that the revolutionary capacity of the masses was curtailed by the decapitation of the libertarian revolution, during and after the Commune. After all, Marxism easily dominated the working-class movement from 1872 on, undoubtedly because of its own strength, but also because the only socialist tradition that could have opposed it had been drowned in blood; there were practically no Marxists among the insurgents of 1871. This automatic purification of revolution has been continued, thanks to the activities of police states, until our times. More and more, revolution has found itself delivered into the hands of its bureaucrats and doctrinaires on the one hand, and to enfeebled and bewildered masses on the other. When the revolutionary elite are guillotined and when Talleyrand is left alive, who will oppose Bonaparte? But to these historical reasons are added economic necessities. The passages by Simone Weil on the condition of the factory worker [3] must be read in order to realize to what degree of moral exhaustion and silent despair the rationalization of labor can lead. Simone Weil is right in saying that the worker's condition is doubly inhumane in that he is first deprived of money and then of dignity. Work in which one can have an interest, creative work, even though it is badly paid, does not degrade life. Industrial socialism has done nothing essential to alleviate the condition of the workers because it has not touched on the very principle of production and the organization of labor, which, on the contrary, it has extolled. It even went so far as to offer the worker a historic justification of his lot of much the same value as a promise of celestial joys to one who works himself to death; never did it attempt to give him the joy of creation. The political form of society is no longer in question at this level, but the beliefs of a technical civilization on which capitalism and socialism are equally dependent. Any ideas that do not advance the solution of this problem hardly touch on the misfortunes of the worker.

Only through the interplay of economic forces, so much admired by Marx, has the proletariat been able to reject the historical mission with which Marx had rightly charged it. His error can be excused because, confronted with the debasement of the ruling

[3] *La Condition ouvrière* (Paris: Gallimard).

classes, a man who has the future of civilization at heart instinctively looks for an elite as a replacement. But this instinctive search is not, in itself alone, creative. The revolutionary bourgeoisie seized power in 1789 because they already had it. At this period legality, as Jules Monnerot says, was lagging behind the facts. The facts were that the bourgeoisie were already in possession of the posts of command and of the new power: money. The proletariat were not at all in the same position, having only their poverty and their hopes and being kept in their condition of misery by the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois class debased itself by a mania for production and material power, while the very organization of this mania made the creation of an elite impossible.[4] But criticism of this organization and the development of rebel conscience could, on the contrary, forge a reserve elite. Only revolutionary trade unionism, with Pelloutier and Sorel, embarked on this course and wanted to create, by professional and cultural education, new cadres for which a world without honor was calling and still calls. But that could not be accomplished in a day and the new masters were already on the scene, interested in making immediate use of human unhappiness for the sake of happiness in the distant future, rather than in relieving as much and as soon as possible the suffering of millions of men. The authoritarian socialists deemed that history was going too slowly and that it was necessary, in order to hurry it on, to entrust the mission of the proletariat to a handful of doctrinaires. For that very reason they have been the first to deny this mission. Nevertheless it exists, not in the exclusive sense that Marx gives it, but in the sense that a mission exists for any human group which knows how to derive pride and fecundity from its labors and its sufferings. So that it can manifest itself, however, a risk must be taken and confidence put in working-class freedom and spontaneity. Authoritarian socialism, on the contrary, has confiscated this living freedom for the benefit of an ideal freedom, which is yet to come. In so doing, whether it wished to or not, it

[4] Lenin was the first to record this truth, but without any apparent bitterness. If his words are terrible for revolutionary hopes, they are no less so for Lenin himself. He dared to say, in fact, that the masses would more easily accept bureaucratic and dictatorial centralism because "discipline and organization are assimilated more easily by the proletariat, thanks to the hard school of the factory."

reinforced the attempt at enslavement begun by industrial capitalism. By the combined action of these two factors and during a hundred and fifty years, except in the Paris of the Commune, which was the last refuge of rebel revolution, the proletariat has had no other historical mission but to be betrayed. The workers fought and died to give power to the military or to intellectuals who dreamed of becoming military and who would enslave them in their turn. This struggle, however, has been the source of their dignity, a fact that is recognized by all who have chosen to share their aspirations and their misfortunes. But this dignity has been acquired in opposition to the whole clan of old and new masters. At the very moment when they dare to make use of it, it denies them. In one sense, it announces their eclipse.

The economic predictions of Marx have, therefore, been at least called in question by reality. What remains true in his vision of the economic world is the establishment of a society more and more defined by the rhythm of production. But he shared this concept, in the enthusiasm of his period, with bourgeois ideology. The bourgeois illusions concerning science and technical progress, shared by the authoritarian socialists, gave birth to the civilization of the machine-tamers, which can, through the stresses of competition and the desire for domination, be separated into enemy blocs, but which on the economic plane is subject to identical laws: the accumulation of capital and rationalized and continually increasing production. The political difference, which concerns the degree of omnipotence of the State, is appreciable, but can be reduced by economic evolution. Only the difference in ethical concepts—formal virtue as opposed to historical cynicism—seems substantial. But the imperative of production dominates both universes and makes them, on the economic plane, one world.[5]

In any event, if the economic imperative can no longer be denied,[6]

[5] It is worth specifying that productivity is only injurious when it is considered as an end, not as a means, in which case it could have a liberating effect.

[6] Although it was deniable—until the eighteenth century—during all the period in which Marx thought he had discovered it. Historical examples in which the conflict between forms of civilization did not end in progress in methods of production: destruction of the Mycenaean civilization, invasion of Rome by the barbarians, expulsion of the Moors from Spain, extermination of the Albigenses.

its consequences are not what Marx imagined. Economically speaking, capitalism becomes oppressive through the phenomenon of accumulation. It is oppressive through being what it is, it accumulates in order to increase what it is, to exploit it all the more, and accordingly to accumulate still more. At that moment accumulation would be necessary only to a very small extent in order to guarantee social benefits. But the revolution, in its turn, becomes industrialized and realizes that, when accumulation is an attribute of technology itself, and not of capitalism, the machine finally conjures up the machine. Every form of collectivity, fighting for survival, is forced to accumulate instead of distributing its revenues. It accumulates in order to increase in size and so to increase in power. Whether bourgeois or socialist, it postpones justice for a later date, in the interests of power alone. But power opposes other forms of power. It arms and rearms because others are arming and rearming. It does not stop accumulating and will never cease to do so until the day when perhaps it will reign alone on earth. Moreover, for that to happen, it must pass through a war. Until that day the proletariat will receive only the bare minimum for its subsistence. The revolution compels itself to construct, at a great expenditure in human lives, the industrial and capitalist intermediary that its own system demands. Revenue is replaced by human labor. Slavery then becomes the general condition, and the gates of heaven remain locked. Such is the economic law governing a world that lives by the cult of production, and the reality is even more bloody than the law. Revolution, in the dilemma into which it has been led by its bourgeois opponents and its nihilist supporters, is nothing but slavery. Unless it changes its principles and its path, it can have no other final result than servile rebellions, obliterated in blood or the hideous prospect of atomic suicide. The will to power, the nihilist struggle for domination and authority, have done considerably more than sweep away the Marxist Utopia. This has become in its turn a historic fact destined to be put to use like all the other historic facts. This idea, which was supposed to dominate history, has become lost in history; the concept of abolishing means has been reduced to a means in itself and cynically manipulated for the most banal and bloody ends. The uninterrupted development of production has not ruined the capitalist regime to

the benefit of the revolution. It has equally been the ruin of both bourgeois and revolutionary society to the benefit of an idol that has the snout of power.

How could a so-called scientific socialism conflict to such a point with facts? The answer is easy: it was not scientific. On the contrary, its defeat resulted from a method ambiguous enough to wish to be simultaneously determinist and prophetic, dialectic and dogmatic. If the mind is only the reflection of events, it cannot anticipate their progress, except by hypothesis. If Marxist theory is determined by economics, it can describe the past history of production, not its future, which remains in the realms of probability. The task of historical materialism can only be to establish a method of criticism of contemporary society; it is only capable of making suppositions, unless it abandons its scientific attitude, about the society of the future. Moreover, is it not for this reason that its most important work is called *Capital* and not *Revolution?* Marx and the Marxists allowed themselves to prophesy the future and the triumph of Communism to the detriment of their postulates and of scientific method.

Then predictions could be scientific, on the contrary, only by ceasing to prophesy definitively. Marxism is not scientific; at the best, it has scientific prejudices. It brought out into the open the profound difference between scientific reasoning, that fruitful instrument of research, of thought, and even of rebellion, and historical reasoning, which German ideology invented by its negation of all principles. Historical reasoning is not a type of reasoning that, within the framework of its own functions, can pass judgment on the world. While pretending to judge it, it really tries to determine its course. Essentially a part of events, it directs them and is simultaneously pedagogic and all-conquering. Moreover, its most abstruse descriptions conceal the most simple truths. If man is reduced to being nothing but a character in history, he has no other choice but to subside into the sound and fury of a completely irrational history or to endow history with the form of human reason. Therefore the history of contemporary nihilism is nothing but a prolonged endeavor to give order, by human forces alone and simply by force, to a history no longer endowed with order. The

pseudo-reasoning ends by identifying itself with cunning and strategy, while waiting to culminate in the ideological Empire. What part could science play in this concept? Nothing is less determined on conquest than reason. History is not made with scientific scruples; we are even condemned to not making history from the moment when we claim to act with scientific objectivity. Reason does not preach, or if it does, it is no longer reason. That is why historical reason is an irrational and romantic form of reason, which sometimes recalls the false logic of the insane and at other times the mystic affirmation of the word.

The only really scientific aspect of Marxism is to be found in its preliminary rejection of myths and in its exposure of the crudest kind of interests. But in this respect Marx is not more scientific in his attitude than La Rochefoucauld; and that is just the attitude that he abandons when he embarks on prophecy. Therefore it is not surprising that, to make Marxism scientific and to preserve this fiction, which is very useful in this century of science, it has been a necessary first step to render science Marxist through terror. The progress of science, since Marx, has roughly consisted in replacing determinism and the rather crude mechanism of its period by a doctrine of provisional probability. Marx wrote to Engels that the Darwinian theory constituted the very foundation of their method. For Marxism to remain infallible, it has therefore been necessary to deny all biological discoveries made since Darwin. As it happens that all discoveries since the unexpected mutations established by De Vries have consisted in introducing, contrary to the doctrines of determinism, the idea of chance into biology, it has been necessary to entrust Lysenko with the task of disciplining chromosomes and of demonstrating once again the truth of the most elementary determinism. That is ridiculous: but put a police force under Flaubert's Monsieur Homais and he would no longer be ridiculous, and there we have the twentieth century. As far as that is concerned, the twentieth century has also witnessed the denial of the principle of indeterminism in science, of limited relativity, of the quantum theory,[7] and, finally, of every general tendency of contemporary science. Marxism is only scientific today in defiance of

[7] Roger Callois, in *Critique du Marxisme* (Paris: Gallimard), remarks that Stalinism objects to the quantum theory, but makes use of atomic science, which is derived from it.

Heisenberg, Bohr, Einstein, and all the greatest minds of our time. After all, there is really nothing mysterious about the principle that consists in using scientific reasoning to the advantage of a prophecy. This has already been named the principle of authority, and it is this that guides the Churches when they wish to subject living reason to dead faith and freedom of the intellect to the maintenance of temporal power.

Finally, there remains of Marx's prophecy—henceforth in conflict with its two principles, economy and science—only the passionate annunciation of an event that will take place in the very far future. The only recourse of the Marxists consists in saying that the delays are simply longer than was imagined and that one day, far away in the future, the end will justify all. In other words, we are in purgatory and we are promised that there will be no hell. And so the problem that is posed is of another order. If the struggle waged by one or two generations throughout a period of economic evolution which is, perforce, beneficial suffices to bring about a classless society, then the necessary sacrifice becomes comprehensible to the man with a militant turn of mind; the future for him has a concrete aspect—the aspect of his child, for instance. But if, when the sacrifice of several generations has proved insufficient, we must then embark on an infinite period of universal strife one thousand times more destructive than before, then the conviction of faith is needed in order to accept the necessity of killing and dying. This new faith is no more founded on pure reason than were the ancient faiths.

In what terms is it possible to imagine this end of history? Marx did not fall back on Hegel's terms. He said, rather obscurely, that Communism was only a necessary aspect of the future of humanity, and did not comprise the entire future. But either Communism does not terminate the history of contradictions and suffering, and then it is no longer possible to see how one can justify so much effort and sacrifice; or it does terminate it, and it is no longer possible to imagine the continuation of history except as an advance toward this perfected form of society. Thus a mystic idea is arbitrarily introduced into a description that claims to be scientific. The final disappearance of political economy—the favorite theme of Marx and Engels—signifies the end of all suffering. Economics, in fact, coincides with pain and suffering in history, which disap-

pear with the disappearance of history. We arrive at last in the Garden of Eden.

We come no nearer to solving the problem by declaring that it is not a question of the end of history, but of a leap into the midst of a different history. We can only imagine this other history in terms of our own history; for man they are both one and the same thing. Moreover, this other history poses the same dilemma. Either it is not the solution of all contradictions and we suffer, die, and kill for almost nothing, or it is the solution of contradictions and therefore, to all intents and purposes, terminates our history. Marxism, at this stage, is only justified by the definitive city.

Can it be said, therefore, that this city of ends has a meaning? It has, in terms of the sacred universe, once the religious postulate has been admitted. The world was created, it will have an end; Adam left Eden, humanity must return there. It has no meaning, in the historical universe, if the dialectical postulate is admitted. The dialectic correctly applied cannot and must not come to an end.[8] The antagonistic terms of a historical situation can negate one another and then be surmounted in a new synthesis. But there is no reason why this new synthesis should be better than the original. Or rather there is only a reason for this supposition, if one arbitrarily imposes an end to the dialectic, and if one then applies a judgment based on outside values. If the classless society is going to terminate history, then capitalist society is, in effect, superior to feudal society to the extent that it brings the advent of this classless society still nearer. But if the dialectic postulate is admitted at all, it must be admitted entirely. Just as aristocratic society has been succeeded by a society without an aristocracy but with classes, it must be concluded that the society of classes will be succeeded by a classless society, but animated by a new antagonism still to be defined. A movement that is refused a beginning cannot have an end. "If socialism," says an anarchist essayist,[9] "is an eternal evolution, its means are its end." More precisely, it has no ends; it has only means which are guaranteed by nothing unless by a value foreign to evolution. In this sense, it is correct to remark that the dialectic is not and cannot be revolutionary. From our point of

[8] See the excellent discussion by Jules Monnerot in *Sociologie du communisme,* Part III.

[9] Ernestan: *Socialism and Freedom.*

view, it is only nihilism—pure movement that aims at denying everything which is not itself.

There is in this universe no reason, therefore, to imagine the end of history. That is the only justification, however, for the sacrifices demanded of humanity in the name of Marxism. But it has no other reasonable basis but a *petitio principii,* which introduces into history—a kingdom that was meant to be unique and self-sufficient —a value foreign to history. Since that value is, at the same time, foreign to ethics, it is not, properly speaking, a value on which one can base one's conduct; it is a dogma without foundation that can be adopted only as the desperate effort to escape of a mind which is being stifled by solitude or by nihilism, or a value which is going to be imposed by those whom dogma profits. The end of history is not an exemplary or a perfectionist value; it is an arbitrary and terroristic principle.

Marx recognized that all revolutions before his time had failed. But he claimed that the revolution announced by him must succeed definitively. Up to now, the workers' movement has lived on this affirmation which has been continually belied by facts and of which it is high time that the falsehood should be dispassionately denounced. In proportion as the prophecy was postponed, the affirmation of the coming of the final kingdom, which could only find the most feeble support in reason, became an article of faith. The sole value of the Marxist world henceforth resides, despite Marx, in a dogma imposed on an entire ideological empire. The kingdom of ends is used, like the ethics of eternity and the kingdom of heaven, for purposes of social mystification. Élie Halévy declared himself unqualified to say if socialism was going to lead to the universalization of the Swiss Republic or to European Caesarism. Nowadays we are better informed. The prophecies of Nietzsche, on this point at least, are justified. Marxism is henceforth to win fame, in defiance of its own teachings and, by an inevitable process of logic, by intellectual Caesarism, which we must now finally describe. The last representative of the struggle of justice against grace, it takes over, without having wanted to do so, the struggle of justice against truth. How to live without grace—that is the question that dominates the nineteenth century. "By justice," answered all those who did not want to accept absolute nihilism. To the people who despaired of the kingdom of heaven, they promised the kingdom of

men. The preaching of the City of Humanity increased in fervor up to the end of the nineteenth century, when it became really visionary in tone and placed scientific certainties in the service of Utopia. But the kingdom has retreated into the distance, gigantic wars have ravaged the oldest countries of Europe, the blood of rebels has bespattered walls, and total justice has approached not a step nearer. The question of the twentieth century—for which the terrorists of 1905 died and which tortures the contemporary world—has gradually been specified: how to live without grace and without justice?

Only nihilism, and not rebellion, has answered that question. Up to now, only nihilism has spoken, returning once more to the theme of the romantic rebels: "Frenzy." Frenzy in terms of history is called "power." The will to power came to take the place of the will to justice, pretending at first to be identified with it and then relegating it to a place somewhere at the end of history, waiting until such time as nothing remains on earth to dominate. Thus the ideological consequence has triumphed over the economic consequence: the history of Russian Communism gives the lie to every one of its principles. Once more we find, at the end of this long journey, metaphysical rebellion, which, this time, advances to the clash of arms and the whispering of passwords, but forgetful of its real principles, burying its solitude in the bosom of armed masses, covering the emptiness of its negations with obstinate scholasticism, still directed toward the future, which it has made its only god, but separated from it by a multitude of nations that must be overthrown and continents that must be dominated. With action as its unique principle, and with the kingdom of man as an alibi, it has already begun, in the east of Europe, to construct its own armed camp, face to face with other armed camps.

The Kingdom of Ends

Marx never dreamed of such a terrifying apotheosis. Nor, indeed, did Lenin, though he took a decisive step toward establishing a

military Empire. As good a strategist as he was a mediocre philosopher, he first of all posed himself the problem of the seizure of power. Let us note immediately that it is absolutely false to talk, as is often done, of Lenin's Jacobinism. Only his idea of units of agitators and revolutionaries is Jacobin. The Jacobins believed in principles and in virtue; they died because they had to deny them. Lenin believes only in the revolution and in the virtue of expediency. "One must be prepared for every sacrifice, to use if necessary every stratagem, ruse, illegal method, to be determined to conceal the truth, for the sole purpose of penetrating labor unions . . . and of accomplishing, despite everything, the Communist task." The struggle against formal morality, inaugurated by Hegel and Marx, is found again in Lenin with his criticism of inefficacious revolutionary attitudes. Complete dominion was the aim of this movement.

If we examine the two works written at the beginning [10] and at the end [11] of his career as an agitator, one is struck by the fact that he never ceased to fight mercilessly against the sentimental forms of revolutionary action. He wanted to abolish the morality of revolutionary action because he believed, correctly, that revolutionary power could not be established while still respecting the Ten Commandments. When he appears, after his first experiments on the stage of history, where he was to play such an important role, to see him take the world so freely and so naturally as it had been shaped by the ideology and the economy of the preceding century, one would imagine him to be the first man of a new era. Completely impervious to anxiety, to nostalgia, to ethics, he takes command, looks for the best method of making the machine run, and decides that certain virtues are suitable for the driver of history's chariot and that others are not. He gropes a little at first and hesitates as to whether Russia should first pass through the capitalist and industrial phase. But this comes to the same as doubting whether the revolution can take place in Russia. He himself is Russian and his task is to make the Russian Revolution. He jettisons economic fatalism and embarks on action. He roundly declares, from 1902 on, that the workers will never elaborate an independent ideology

[10] *What Must Be Done?* (1902).
[11] *The State and Revolution* (1917).

by themselves. He denies the spontaneity of the masses. Socialist doctrine supposes a scientific basis that only the intellectuals can give it. When he says that all distinctions between workers and intellectuals must be effaced, what he really means is that it is possible not to be proletarian and know better than the proletariat what its interests are. He then congratulates Lassalle for having carried on a tenacious struggle against the spontaneity of the masses. "Theory," he says, "should subordinate spontaneity." [12] In plain language, that means that revolution needs leaders and theorists.

He attacks both reformism, which he considers guilty of dissipating revolutionary strength, and terrorism,[13] which he thinks an exemplary and inefficacious attitude. The revolution, before being either economic or sentimental, is military. Until the day that the revolution breaks out, revolutionary action is identified with strategy. Autocracy is its enemy, whose main source of strength is the police force, which is nothing but a corps of professional political soldiers. The conclusion is simple: "The struggle against the political police demands special qualities, demands professional revolutionaries." The revolution will have its professional army as well as the masses, which can be conscripted when needed. This corps of agitators must be organized before the mass is organized. A network of agents is the expression that Lenin uses, thus announcing the reign of the secret society and of the realist monks of the revolution: "We are the Young Turks of the revolution," he said, "with something of the Jesuit added." From that moment the proletariat no longer has a mission. It is only one powerful means, among others, in the hands of the revolutionary ascetics.[14]

The problem of the seizure of power brings in its train the problem of the State. *The State and Revolution* (1917), which deals with this subject, is the strangest and most contradictory of pamphlets. Lenin employs in it his favorite method, which is the method of authority. With the help of Marx and Engels, he begins by taking a stand against any kind of reformism which would claim

[12] Marx said much the same: "What certain proletarians, or even the entire proletariat, imagine to be their goal is of no importance."
[13] We know that his elder brother, who had chosen terrorism, was hanged.
[14] Heine already called the socialists "the new puritans." Puritanism and revolution go, historically, together.

to utilize the bourgeois State—that organism of domination of one class over another. The bourgeois State owes its survival to the police and to the army because it is primarily an instrument of oppression. It reflects both the irreconcilable antagonism of the classes and the forcible subjugation of this antagonism. This authority of fact is only worthy of contempt. "Even the head of the military power of a civilized State must envy the head of the clan whom patriarchal society surrounded with voluntary respect, not with respect imposed by the club." Moreover, Engels has firmly established that the concept of the State and the concept of a free society are irreconcilable. "Classes will disappear as ineluctably as they appeared. With the disappearance of classes, the State will inevitably disappear. The society that reorganizes production on the basis of the free and equal association of the producers will relegate the machine of State to the place it deserves: to the museum of antiquities, side by side with the spinning wheel and the bronze ax."

Doubtless this explains why inattentive readers have ascribed the reason for writing *The State and Revolution* to Lenin's anarchistic tendencies and have regretted the peculiar posterity of a doctrine so severe about the army, the police, the club, and bureaucracy. But Lenin's points of view, in order to be understood, must always be considered in terms of strategy. If he defends so very energetically Engels's thesis about the disappearance of the bourgeois State, it is because he wants, on the one hand, to put an obstacle in the way of the pure "economism" of Plekhanov and Kautsky and, on the other, to demonstrate that Kerensky's government is a bourgeois government, which must be destroyed. One month later, moreover, he destroys it.

It was also necessary to answer those who objected to the fact that the revolution itself had need of an administrative and repressive apparatus. There again Marx and Engels are largely used to prove, authoritatively, that the proletarian State is not a State organized on the lines of other states, but a State which, by definition, is in the process of withering away. "As soon as there is no longer a social class which must be kept oppressed . . . a State ceases to be necessary. The first act by which the [proletarian] State really establishes itself as the representative of an entire society—the seizure of the society's means of production—is, at

the same time, the last real act of the State. For the government of people is substituted the administration of things. . . . The State is not abolished, it perishes." The bourgeois State is first suppressed by the proletariat. Then, but only then, the proletarian State fades away. The dictatorship of the proletariat is necessary—first, to crush or suppress what remains of the bourgeois class; secondly, to bring about the socialization of the means of production. Once these two tasks are accomplished, it immediately begins to wither away.

Lenin, therefore, begins from the firm and definite principle that the State dies as soon as the socialization of the means of production is achieved and the exploiting class has consequently been suppressed. Yet, in the same pamphlet, he ends by justifying the preservation, even after the socialization of the means of production and, without any predictable end, of the dictatorship of a revolutionary faction over the rest of the people. The pamphlet, which makes continual reference to the experiences of the Commune, flatly contradicts the contemporary federalist and anti-authoritarian ideas that produced the Commune; and it is equally opposed to the optimistic forecasts of Marx and Engels. The reason for this is clear; Lenin had not forgotten that the Commune failed. As for the means of such a surprising demonstration, they were even more simple: with each new difficulty encountered by the revolution, the State as described by Marx is endowed with a supplementary prerogative. Ten pages farther on, without any kind of transition, Lenin in effect affirms that power is necessary to crush the resistance of the exploiters, "and also to direct the great mass of the population, peasantry, lower middle classes, and semi-proletariat, in the management of the socialist economy." The shift here is undeniable; the provisional State of Marx and Engels is charged with a new mission, which risks prolonging its life indefinitely. Already we can perceive the contradiction of the Stalinist regime in conflict with its official philosophy. Either this regime has realized the classless socialist society, and the maintenance of a formidable apparatus of repression is not justified in Marxist terms, or it has not realized the classless society and has therefore proved that Marxist doctrine is erroneous and, in particular, that the socialization of the means of production does not mean the disap-

pearance of classes. Confronted with its official doctrine, the regime is forced to choose: the doctrine is false, or the regime has betrayed it. In fact, together with Nechaiev and Tkachev, it is Lassalle, the inventor of State socialism, whom Lenin has caused to triumph in Russia, to the detriment of Marx. From this moment on, the history of the interior struggles of the party, from Lenin to Stalin, is summed up in the struggle between the workers' democracy and military and bureaucratic dictatorship; in other words, between justice and expediency.

There is a moment's doubt about whether Lenin is not going to find a kind of means of conciliation when we hear him praising the measures adopted by the Commune: elected, revocable functionaries, remunerated like workers, and replacement of industrial bureaucracy by direct workers' management. We even catch a glimpse of a federalist Lenin who praises the institution and representation of the communes. But it becomes rapidly clear that this federalism is only extolled to the extent that it signifies the abolition of parliamentarianism. Lenin, in defiance of every historical truth, calls it centralism and immediately puts the accent on the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, while reproaching the anarchists for their intransigence concerning the State. At this point a new affirmation, based on Engels, is introduced which justifies the continuation of the dictatorship of the proletariat after socialization, after the disappearance of the bourgeois class, and even after control by the masses has finally been achieved. The preservation of authority will now have as limits those that are prescribed for it by the very conditions of production. For example, the final withering away of the State will coincide with the moment when accommodation can be provided for all, free of charge. It is the higher phase of Communism: "'To each according to his needs." Until then, the State will continue.

How rapid will be the development toward this higher phase of Communism when each shall receive according to his needs? "That, we do not and cannot know. . . . We have no data that allow us to solve these questions." "For the sake of greater clarity," Lenin affirms with his customary arbitrariness, "it has never been vouchsafed to any socialist to guarantee the advent of the higher phase of Communism." It can be said that at this point freedom

definitely dies. From the rule of the masses and the concept of the proletarian revolution we first pass on to the idea of a revolution made and directed by professional agents. The relentless criticism of the State is then reconciled with the necessary, but provisional, dictatorship of the proletariat, embodied in its leaders. Finally, it is announced that the end of this provisional condition cannot be foreseen and that, what is more, no one has ever presumed to promise that there will be an end. After that it is logical that the autonomy of the soviets should be contested, Makhno betrayed, and the sailors of Kronstadt crushed by the party.

Undoubtedly, many of the affirmations of Lenin, who was a passionate lover of justice, can still be opposed to the Stalinist regime; mainly, the notion of the withering away of the State. Even if it is admitted that the proletarian State cannot disappear before many years have passed, it is still necessary, according to Marxist doctrine, that it should tend to disappear and become less and less restrictive in order that it should be able to call itself proletarian. It is certain that Lenin believed this trend to be inevitable and that, in this particular sense, he has been ignored. For more than thirty years the proletarian State has shown no signs of progressive anemia. On the contrary, it seems to be enjoying increasing prosperity. Meanwhile, in a lecture at the Sverdlov University two years later, under the pressure of outside events and interior realities, Lenin spoke with a precision which left little doubt about the indefinite continuation of the proletarian super-State. "With this machine, or rather this weapon [the State], we shall crush every form of exploitation, and when there are no longer any possibilities of exploitation left on earth, no more people owning land or factories, no more people gorging themselves under the eyes of others who are starving, when such things become impossible, then and only then shall we cast this machine aside. Then there will be neither State nor exploitation." Therefore as long as there exists on earth, and no longer in a specific society, one single oppressed person and one proprietor, so long the State will continue to exist. It also will be obliged to increase in strength during this period so as to vanquish one by one the injustices, the governments responsible for injustice, the obstinately bourgeois nations, and the people who are blind to their own interests. And when, on an earth

that has finally been subdued and purged of enemies, the final iniquity shall have been drowned in the blood of the just and the unjust, then the State, which has reached the limit of all power, a monstrous idol covering the entire earth, will be discreetly absorbed into the silent city of Justice.

Under the easily predictable pressure of adverse imperialism, the imperialism of justice was born, in reality, with Lenin. But imperialism, even the imperialism of justice, has no other end but defeat or world empire. Until then it has no other means but injustice. From now on, the doctrine is definitively identified with the prophecy. For the sake of justice in the far-away future, it authorizes injustice throughout the entire course of history and becomes the type of mystification which Lenin detested more than anything else in the world. It contrives the acceptance of injustice, crime, and falsehood by the promise of a miracle. Still greater production, still more power, uninterrupted labor, incessant suffering, permanent war, and then a moment will come when universal bondage in the totalitarian empire will be miraculously changed into its opposite: free leisure in a universal republic. Pseudo-revolutionary mystification has now acquired a formula: all freedom must be crushed in order to conquer the empire, and one day the empire will be the equivalent of freedom. And so the way to unity passes through totality.

Totality and Trials

Totality is, in effect, nothing other than the ancient dream of unity common to both believers and rebels, but projected horizontally onto an earth deprived of God. To renounce every value, therefore, amounts to renouncing rebellion in order to accept the Empire and slavery. Criticism of formal values cannot pass over the concept of freedom. Once the impossibility has been recognized of creating, by means of the forces of rebellion alone, the free individual of whom the romantics dreamed, freedom itself has also been incorporated in the movement of history. It has become free-

dom fighting for existence, which, in order to exist, must create itself. Identified with the dynamism of history, it cannot play its proper role until history comes to a stop, in the realization of the Universal City. Until then, every one of its victories will lead to an antithesis that will render it pointless. The German nation frees itself from its oppressors, but at the price of the freedom of every German. The individuals under a totalitarian regime are not free, even though man in the collective sense is free. Finally, when the Empire delivers the entire human species, freedom will reign over herds of slaves, who at least will be free in relation to God and in general, in relation to every kind of transcendence. The dialectic miracle, the transformation of quantity into quality, is explained here: it is the decision to call total servitude freedom. Moreover, as in all the examples cited by Hegel and Marx, there is no objective transformation, but only a subjective change of denomination. In other words, there is no miracle. If the only hope of nihilism lies in thinking that millions of slaves can one day constitute a humanity which will be freed forever, then history is nothing but a desperate dream. Historical thought was to deliver man from subjection to a divinity; but this liberation demanded of him the most absolute subjection to historical evolution. Then man takes refuge in the permanence of the party in the same way that he formerly prostrated himself before the altar. That is why the era which dares to claim that it is the most rebellious that has ever existed only offers a choice of various types of conformity. The real passion of the twentieth century is servitude.

But total freedom is no more easy to conquer than individual freedom. To ensure man's empire over the world, it is necessary to suppress in the world and in man everything that escapes the Empire, everything that does not come under the reign of quantity: and this is an endless undertaking. The Empire must embrace time, space, and people, which compose the three dimensions of history. It is simultaneously war, obscurantism, and tyranny, desperately affirming that one day it will be liberty, fraternity, and truth; the logic of its postulates obliges it to do so. There is undoubtedly in Russia today, even in its Communist doctrines, a truth that denies Stalinist ideology. But this ideology has its logic, which must be isolated and exposed if we wish the revolutionary spirit to escape final disgrace.

The cynical intervention of the armies of the Western powers against the Soviet Revolution demonstrated, among other things, to the Russian revolutionaries that war and nationalism were realities in the same category as the class struggle. Without an international solidarity of the working classes, a solidarity that would come into play automatically, no interior revolution could be considered likely to survive unless an international order were created. From then on, it was necessary to admit that the Universal City could only be built on two conditions: either by almost simultaneous revolutions in every big country, or by the liquidation, through war, of the bourgeois nations; permanent revolution or permanent war. We know that the first point of view almost triumphed. The revolutionary movements in Germany, Italy, and France marked the high point in revolutionary hopes and aspirations. But the crushing of these revolutions and the ensuing reinforcement of capitalist regimes have made war the reality of the revolution. Thus the philosophy of enlightenment finally led to the Europe of the blackout. By the logic of history and of doctrine, the Universal City, which was to have been realized by the spontaneous insurrection of the oppressed, has been little by little replaced by the Empire, imposed by means of power. Engels, with the approval of Marx, dispassionately accepted this prospect when he wrote in answer to Bakunin's *Appeal to the Slavs:* "The next world war will cause the disappearance from the surface of the globe, not only of reactionary classes and dynasties, but of whole races of reactionaries. That also is part of progress." That particular form of progress, in Engels's mind, was destined to eliminate the Russia of the czars. Today the Russian nation has reversed the direction of progress. War, cold and lukewarm, is the slavery imposed by world Empire. But now that it has become imperialist, the revolution is in an impasse. If it does not renounce its false principles in order to return to the origins of rebellion, it only means the continuation, for several generations and until capitalism spontaneously decomposes, of a total dictatorship over hundreds of millions of men; or, if it wants to precipitate the advent of the Universal City, it only signifies the atomic war, which it does not want and after which any city whatsoever will only be able to contemplate complete destruction. World revolution, by the very laws

of the history it so imprudently deified, is condemned to the police or to the bomb. At the same time, it finds itself confronted with yet another contradiction. The sacrifice of ethics and virtue, the acceptance of all the means that it constantly justified by the end it pursued, can only be accepted, if absolutely necessary, in terms of an end that is reasonably likely to be realized. The cold war supposes, by the indefinite prolongation of dictatorship, the indefinite negation of this end. The danger of war, moreover, makes this end highly unlikely. The extension of the Empire over the face of the earth is an inevitable necessity for twentieth-century revolution. But this necessity confronts it with a final dilemma: to construct new principles for itself or to renounce justice and peace, whose definitive reign it always wanted.

While waiting to dominate space, the Empire sees itself also compelled to reign over time. In denying every stable truth, it is compelled to go to the point of denying the very lowest form of truth—the truth of history. It has transported revolution, which is still impossible on a worldwide scale, back into a past that it is determined to deny. Even that, too, is logical. Any kind of coherence that is not purely economic between the past and the future of humanity supposes a constant which, in its turn, can lead to a belief in a human nature. The profound coherence that Marx, who was a man of culture, had perceived as existing between all civilizations, threatened to swamp his thesis and to bring to light a natural continuity, far broader in scope than economic continuity. Little by little, Russian Communism has been forced to burn its bridges, to introduce a solution of continuity into the problem of historical evolution. The negation of every genius who proves to be a heretic (and almost all of them do), the denial of the benefits of civilization, of art—to the infinite degree in which it escapes from history—and the renunciation of vital traditions, have gradually forced contemporary Marxism within narrower and narrower limits. It has not sufficed for Marxism to deny or to silence the things in the history of the world which cannot be assimilated by its doctrine, or to reject the discoveries of modern science. It has also had to rewrite history, even the most recent and the best-known, even the history of the party and of the Revolution. Year by year, sometimes month by month, *Pravda* corrects itself, and rewritten edi-

tions of the official history books follow one another off the presses. Lenin is censored, Marx is not published. At this point comparison with religious obscurantism is no longer even fair. The Church never went so far as to decide that the divine manifestation was embodied in two, then in four, or in three, and then again in two, persons. The acceleration of events that is part of our times also affects the fabrication of truth, which, accomplished at this speed, becomes pure fantasy. As in the fairy story, in which all the looms of an entire town wove the empty air to provide clothes for the king, thousands of men, whose strange profession it is, rewrite a presumptuous version of history, which is destroyed the same evening while waiting for the calm voice of a child to proclaim suddenly that the king is naked. This small voice, the voice of rebellion, will then be saying, what all the world can already see, that a revolution which, in order to last, is condemned to deny its universal vocation, or to renounce itself in order to be universal, is living by false principles.

Meanwhile, these principles continue to dominate the lives of millions of men. The dream of Empire, held in check by the realities of time and space, gratifies its desires on humanity. People are not only hostile to the Empire as individuals: in that case the traditional methods of terror would suffice. They are hostile to it insofar as human nature, to date, has never been able to live by history alone and has always escaped from it by some means. The Empire supposes a negation and a certainty: the certainty of the infinite malleability of man and the negation of human nature. Propaganda techniques serve to measure the degree of this malleability and try to make reflection and conditioned reflex coincide. Propaganda makes it possible to sign a pact with those who for years have been designated as the mortal enemy. Even more, it allows the psychological effect thus obtained to be reversed and the people, once again, to be aligned against this same enemy. The experiment has not yet been brought to an end, but its principle is logical. If there is no human nature, then the malleability of man is, in fact, infinite. Political realism, on this level, is nothing but unbridled romanticism, a romanticism of expediency.

In this way it is possible to explain why Russian Marxism rejects, in its entirety and even though it knows very well how to

make use of it, the world of the irrational. The irrational can serve the Empire as well as refute it. The irrational escapes calculation, and calculation alone must reign in the Empire. Man is only an interplay of forces that can be rationally influenced. A few inconsiderate Marxists were rash enough to imagine that they could reconcile their doctrine with Freud's, for example. Their eyes were opened for them quickly enough. Freud is a heretic thinker and a "petit bourgeois" because he brought to light the unconscious and bestowed on it at least as much reality as on the super or social ego. This unconscious mind can therefore define the originality of a human nature opposed to the historic ego. Man, on the contrary, must be explained in terms of the social and rational ego and as an object of calculation. Therefore it has been necessary to enslave not only each individual life, but also the most irrational and the most solitary event of all, the expectancy of which accompanies man throughout his entire life. The Empire, in its convulsive effort to found a definitive kingdom, strives to integrate death.

A living man can be enslaved and reduced to the historic condition of an object. But if he dies in refusing to be enslaved, he reaffirms the existence of another kind of human nature which refuses to be classified as an object. That is why the accused is never produced and killed before the eyes of the world unless he consents to say that his death is just and unless he conforms to the Empire of objects. One must die dishonored or no longer exist —neither in life nor in death. In the latter event, the victim does not die, he disappears. If he is punished, his punishment would be a silent protest and might cause a fissure in the totality. But the culprit is not punished, he is simply replaced in the totality and thus helps to construct the machine of Empire. He is transformed into a cog in the machinery of production, so indispensable that in the long run he will not be used in production because he is guilty, but considered guilty because production has need of him. The concentration-camp system of the Russians has, in fact, accomplished the dialectical transition from the government of people to the administration of objects, but by identifying people with objects.

Even the enemy must collaborate in the common endeavor. Beyond the confines of the Empire there is no salvation. This is,

or will be, the Empire of friendship. But this friendship is the befriending of objects, for the friend cannot be preferred to the Empire. The friendship of people—and there is no other definition of it—is specific solidarity, to the point of death, against everything that is not part of the kingdom of friendship. The friendship of objects is friendship in general, friendship with everything, which supposes—when it is a question of self-preservation—mutual denunciation. He who loves his friend loves him in the present, and the revolution wants to love only a man who has not yet appeared. To love is, in a certain way, to kill the perfect man who is going to be born of the revolution. In order that one day he may live, he should from now on be preferred to anyone else. In the kingdom of humanity, men are bound by ties of affection; in the Empire of objects, men are united by mutual accusation. The city that planned to be the city of fraternity becomes an ant heap of solitary men.

On another plane, only a brute in a state of irrational fury can imagine that men should be sadistically tortured in order to obtain their consent. Such an act only accomplishes the subjugation of one man by another, in an outrageous relationship between persons. The representative of rational totality is content, on the contrary, to allow the object to subdue the person in the soul of man. The highest mind is first of all reduced to the level of the lowest by the police technique of joint accusation. Then five, ten, twenty nights of insomnia will culminate an illusory conviction and will bring yet another dead soul into the world. From this point of view, the only psychological revolution known to our times since Freud's has been brought about by the NKVD and the political police in general. Guided by a determinist hypothesis that calculates the weak points and the degree of elasticity of the soul, these new techniques have once again thrust aside one of man's limits and have attempted to demonstrate that no individual psychology is original and that the common measure of all human character is matter. They have literally created the physics of the soul.

From that point on, traditional human relations have been transformed. These progressive transformations characterize the world of rational terror in which, in different degrees, Europe lives. Dialogue and personal relations have been replaced by propaganda or

polemic, which are two kinds of monologue. Abstraction, which belongs to the world of power and calculation, has replaced the real passions, which are in the domain of the flesh and of the irrational. The ration coupon substituted for bread; love and friendship submitted to a doctrine, and destiny to a plan; punishment considered the norm, and production substituted for living creation, quite satisfactorily describe this disembodied Europe, peopled with positive or negative symbols of power. "How miserable," Marx exclaims, "is a society that knows no better means of defense than the executioner!" But in Marx's day the executioner had not yet become a philosopher and at least made no pretense of universal philanthropy.

The ultimate contradiction of the greatest revolution that history ever knew does not, after all, lie entirely in the fact that it lays claim to justice despite an uninterrupted procession of violence and injustice. This is an evil common to all times and a product of servitude or mystification. The tragedy of this revolution is the tragedy of nihilism—it confounds itself with the drama of contemporary intelligence, which, while claiming to be universal, is only responsible for a series of mutilations to men's minds. Totality is not unity. The state of siege, even when it is extended to the very boundaries of the earth, is not reconciliation. The claim to a universal city is supported in this revolution only by rejecting two thirds of the world and the magnificent heritage of the centuries, and by denying, to the advantage of history, both nature and beauty and by depriving man of the power of passion, doubt, happiness, and imaginative invention—in a word, of his greatness. The principles that men give to themselves end by overwhelming their noblest intentions. By dint of argument, incessant struggle, polemics, excommunications, persecutions conducted and suffered, the universal city of free and fraternal man is slowly diverted and gives way to the only universe in which history and expediency can in fact be elevated to the position of supreme judges: the universe of the trial.

Every religion revolves around the concepts of innocence and guilt. Prometheus, the first rebel, however, denies the right to punish. Zeus himself, Zeus above all, is not innocent enough to exercise this right. Thus rebellion, in its very first manifestation, refuses

to recognize punishment as legitimate. But in his last incarnation, at the end of his exhausting journey, the rebel once more adopts the religious concept of punishment and places it at the center of his universe. The supreme judge is no longer in the heavens; history itself acts as an implacable divinity. History, in one sense, is nothing but a protracted punishment, for the real reward will be reaped only at the end of time. We are far, it would seem, from Marxism and from Hegel, and even farther from the first rebels. Nevertheless, all purely historical thought leads to the brink of this abyss. To the extent to which Marx predicted the inevitable establishment of the classless city and to the extent to which he thus established the good will of history, every check to the advance toward freedom must be imputed to the ill will of mankind. Marx reintroduced crime and punishment into the un-Christian world, but only in relation to history. Marxism in one of its aspects is a doctrine of culpability on man's part and innocence on history's. His interpretation of history is that when it is deprived of power, it expresses itself in revolutionary violence; at the height of its power it risked becoming legal violence—in other words, terror and trial.

In the universe of religion, moreover, the final judgment is postponed; it is not necessary for crime to be punished without delay or for innocence to be rewarded. In the new universe, on the other hand, the judgment pronounced by history must be pronounced immediately, for culpability coincides with the check to progress and with punishment. History has judged Bukarin in that it condemned him to death. It proclaims the innocence of Stalin: he is the most powerful man on earth. It is the same with Tito, about whom we do not know, so we are told, whether he is guilty or not. He is on trial, as was Trotsky, whose guilt only became clear to the philosophers of historical crime at the moment when the murderer's ax cracked his skull. Tito has been denounced, but not yet struck down. When he has been struck down, his guilt will be certain. Besides, Trotsky's and Tito's provisional innocence depended and depends to a large extent on geography; they were far removed from the arm of secular power. That is why those who can be reached by that arm must be judged without delay. The definitive judgment of history depends on an infinite number of judgments which will have been pronounced between now and

then and which will finally be confirmed or invalidated. Thus there is the promise of mysterious rehabilitations on the day when the tribunal of the world will be established by the world itself. Some, who will proclaim themselves contemptible traitors, will enter the Pantheon of mankind; others who maintain their innocence will be condemned to the hell of history. But who, then, will be the judge? Man himself, finally fulfilled in his divinity. Meanwhile, those who conceived the prophecy, and who alone are capable of reading in history the meaning with which they previously endowed it, will pronounce sentence—definitive for the guilty, provisional sentences for the judges. But it sometimes happens that those who judge, like Rajk, are judged in their turn. Must we believe that he no longer interpreted history correctly? His defeat and death in fact prove it. Then who guarantees that those who judge him today will not be traitors tomorrow, hurled down from the height of their judgment seat to the concrete caves where history's damned are dying? The guarantee lies in their infallible clairvoyance. What proof is there of that? Their uninterrupted success. The world of trial is a spherical world in which success and innocence authenticate each other and where every mirror reflects the same mystification.

Thus there will be a historic grace,[15] whose power alone can interpret events and which favors or excommunicates the subject of the Empire. To guard against its caprices, the latter has only faith at his disposal—faith as defined in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius: "We should always be prepared, so as never to err, to believe that what I see as white is black, if the hierarchic Church defines it thus." Only this active faith held by the representatives of truth can save the subject from the mysterious ravages of history. He is not yet free of the universe of trial to which he is bound by the historic sentiment of fear. But without this faith he runs a perpetual risk of becoming, without having wished to do so and with the best intentions in the world, an objective criminal.

The universe of trial finally culminates in this concept, at which point we have come full circle. At the end of this long insurrection in the name of human innocence, there arises, by an inevitable per-

[15] "The ruse of reason," in the historical universe, presents the problem of evil in a new form.

version of fact, the affirmation of general culpability. Every man is a criminal who is unaware of being so. The objective criminal is, precisely, he who believed himself innocent. His actions he considered subjectively inoffensive, or even advantageous for the future of justice. But it is demonstrated to him that objectively his actions have been harmful to that future. Are we dealing with scientific objectivity? No, but with historical objectivity. How is it possible to know, for example, if the future of justice is compromised by the unconsidered denunciation of present injustice? Real objectivity would consist in judging by those results which can be scientifically observed and by facts and their general tendencies. But the concept of objective culpability proves that this curious kind of objectivity is only based on results and facts which will only become accessible to science in the year 2000, at the very earliest. Meanwhile, it is embodied in an interminable subjectivity which is imposed on others as objectivity: and that is the philosophic definition of terror. This type of objectivity has no definable meaning, but power will give it a content by decreeing that everything of which it does not approve is guilty. It will consent to say, or allow to be said, to philosophers who live outside the Empire, that in this way it is taking a risk in regard to history, just as the objective culprit took a risk, though without knowing it. When victim and executioner have disappeared, the matter will be judged. But this consolation is of any value only to the executioner, who has really no need of it. Meanwhile, the faithful are regularly bidden to attend strange feasts where, according to scrupulous rites, victims overwhelmed with contrition are offered as sacrifice to the god of history.

The express object of this idea is to prevent indifference in matters of faith. It is compulsory evangelization. The law, whose function it is to pursue suspects, fabricates them. By fabricating them, it converts them. In bourgeois society, for example, every citizen is supposed to approve the law. In objective society every citizen will be presumed to disapprove of it. Or at least he should always be ready to prove that he does not disapprove of it. Culpability no longer has any factual basis; it simply consists of absence of faith, which explains the apparent contradiction of the objective system. Under a capitalist regime, the man who says he is neutral is con-

sidered objectively to be favorable to the regime. Under the regime of the Empire, the man who is neutral is considered hostile objectively to the regime. There is nothing astonishing about that. If a subject of the Empire does not believe in the Empire, he is, of his own choice, nothing, historically speaking; therefore he takes sides against history and is, in other words, a blasphemer. Even lip service paid to faith will not suffice; it must be lived and acted upon in order to be served properly and the citizen must be always on the alert to consent in time to the changes in dogma. At the slightest error potential culpability becomes in its turn objective culpability. Consummating its history in this manner, the revolution is not content with killing all rebellion. It insists on holding every man, even the most servile, responsible for the fact that rebellion ever existed and still exists under the sun. In the universe of the trial, conquered and completed at last, a race of culprits will endlessly shuffle toward an impossible innocence, under the grim regard of the grand inquisitors. In the twentieth century power wears the mask of tragedy.

Here ends Prometheus' surprising itinerary. Proclaiming his hatred of the gods and his love of mankind, he turns away from Zeus with scorn and approaches mortal men in order to lead them in an assault against the heavens. But men are weak and cowardly; they must be organized. They love pleasure and immediate happiness; they must be taught to refuse, in order to grow up, immediate rewards. Thus Prometheus, in his turn, becomes a master who first teaches and then commands. Men doubt that they can safely attack the city of light and are even uncertain whether the city exists. They must be saved from themselves. The hero then tells them that he, and he alone, knows the city. Those who doubt his word will be thrown into the desert, chained to a rock, offered to the vultures. The others will march henceforth in darkness, behind the pensive and solitary master. Prometheus alone has become god and reigns over the solitude of men. But from Zeus he has gained only solitude and cruelty; he is no longer Prometheus, he is Caesar. The real, the eternal Prometheus has now assumed the aspect of one of his victims. The same cry, springing from the depths of the past, rings forever through the Scythian desert.

V

FRENCH AND SOVIET VIEWS

JEAN-PIERRE VIGIER

On December 7, 1961, six thousand young people gathered in a Paris auditorium to listen to a debate by four noted Frenchmen. Their topic was: "Is the dialectic solely a law of history or is it also a law of nature?"

Jean-Paul Sartre and Jean Hippolyte, Sorbonne Professor and Hegelian scholar, upheld the Existentialist viewpoint that dialectical processes are created by men and man alone is involved in their development through his practical action. Therefore dialectical thinking is limited to human history.

Roger Garaudy and Jean-Pierre Vigier defended the Marxist position that the laws of dialectics are universal in scope and apply to all phenomena in nature, society and thought. J. Orcel, Professor of Mineralogy at the National Museum of Natural History, chaired the debate and opened it with some introductory observations on the subject from the Marxist viewpoint.

Vigier was highly qualified to discuss dialectical materialism in the light of present-day scientific developments. One of the leading younger theoretical physicists in France, he is Master of Research at the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris and head of a group at the Institut Henri Poincaré. Together with two Nobel prize winners in physics, the Frenchman Louis De Broglie and the Japanese Hideki Yukawa, and two Marxist scientists, David Bohm and J. P. Terletski, he has been concerned with devising a new theory of elementary particles to meet the problems raised by recent experimental discoveries in nuclear phenomena.

Vigier's presentation and rebuttal, reprinted here, endeavored to answer the chief objections advanced by the Existentialist participants in the debate against the dialectical essence of nature and to demonstrate the narrowness of the view that it is illegitimate to extend dialectical laws to the physical world.

DIALECTICS AND NATURAL SCIENCE

Since Sartre has posed a certain number of questions to me, I will try to answer them. But first of all I would like to express my opinion on the essential meaning of the debate, proceeding from what M. Hippolyte has just said. I think that the key question, the central one, we are discussing this evening is to know whether Marxism is dialectical materialism—the indispensable philosophy of our time—as Sartre himself called it, or whether it is restricted to historical materialism and is a doctrine that explains only the movement of human history.

To answer Sartre's questions, I have formulated them in a philosophical language. . . .

I think that the first question he posed is this:

Does the unity of knowledge, in the area of historical materialism, demand the unity of knowledge as a totalization of all natural processes? Must the dialectical totalization which constitutes the movement of historical being, of its reality, be conceived with a dialectical materialism which would reintegrate it in the dialectical unity of Nature?

I think that for us Marxists the answer to this question is yes. That is to say, historical materialism can acquire its full value only in the more general framework of the dialectic of nature.

This absolutely does not mean that we do not regard historical materialism as having its own specificity and autonomy. Obviously, it has. For us, the analysis given by Marx is a scientific analysis applied to historic processes. The model that he gives is not terminated at any moment of time or limited in its evolution.

I am going to explain myself below. At the level where the Marxist analyses of the movement of history are made, it is true that I can, in a certain sense, consider external nature as inert and construct a specific model whose dialectical movement reproduces the movement of history.

However, we know that this is only a partial truth. The very

activity of man, science in particular, can overturn the predictions of the model in a qualitatively radical way that it could not have foreseen. Marxism ought to be the opposite of dogmatism. This leads me to the second question.

Sartre asks us: *Is a demand of historical totalization in question or does dialectical materialism prove itself on the level of the sciences of nature? Do scientists discover processes of totalization in the physico-chemical process, for example, and since knowledge is a moment of being, are they obliged to have recourse to the dialectical method in order to understand and foresee them?*

On this point, in the preliminary discussion, Orcel and I were a little surprised by this way of putting the question. For us, dialectical materialism is not only a demand of historical totalization, but it results above all from the very movement of science. Let us remember first of all that the idea of a dialectic of nature considerably precedes Marxism proper in the history of human thought, although the latter gave it its modern extension. Without speaking of pre-Socratic philosophers like Heraclitus, to the extent that scientific consciousness has developed since the Renaissance, one sees dialectical analyses spring up prior to Marxism.

I will content myself with recalling a few famous examples. First of all, Darwinism, which was contemporary with Marxism but developed independently of it, in which Marx himself saw a striking example of a dialectical analysis of the evolution of the species. To be sure, a number of Darwin's propositions have not survived but the essential one remains: the idea of a history of life on the globe developing in the very terms of dialectic, of contradictions, of totality, etc. . . . I will not insist on this point for I think that we are all in accord with it. It is true that the dialectic at the level of biology is specific, that human history introduces new elements like the grasp of consciousness, for example, which becomes a historical force. The Darwinian analysis is certainly outmoded in many aspects, but all that we have learned since proceeds along the line of the dialectic. The mechanistic explanations of Darwin have been replaced by richer and more complex analyses combining the external action of the environment with the dynamic belonging to living beings.

Starting from the history of biology and the social sciences, the

idea of evolution has progressively invaded the body of the sciences; after astronomy it intrudes today into chemistry and into physics. However, this idea of history, of evolution, of analysis in terms of development, is for us precisely the profound logical root of the dialectic of nature. One can even say in a sense that all scientific progress is accomplished through abandoning static descriptions to the benefit of dynamic analyses combining the intrinsic properties of the analyzed phenomena. For us science progresses from Cuvier to Darwin, from the static to the dynamic, from formal logic to dialectical logic. Orcel has given examples (the continental masses on the global scale, the history of terrains on the continental scale, of crystals, etc. . . .) which render account of the action of the natural milieu where the evolution under consideration unfolds.

Furthermore, scientific understanding progresses as this analysis permits us to arrive at the internal contradictory properties of the systems analyzed. The material elements considered as inert on one level, for example the macroscopic bodies described by classical physics, reveal prodigiously complex and mobile structures to analysis as scientific knowledge progresses. On our scale this table can appear inert to me, but we know that it is made of molecules in extraordinarily complex and violent movement. These molecules themselves break down into mobile atoms when I push analysis further.

Finally, the atoms themselves split into the so-called elementary particles, which in their turn disclose equally mobile and complex internal structures. The experiments performed with the giant accelerators teach us that the micro-world, far from being composed of permanent and stable elements, is itself of a prodigious complexity. The protons and neutrons are surrounded by clouds of particles that are created and destroyed with a prodigious rapidity. Their "heart" itself is very probably complex. The recently discovered mesons can equally be considered as assemblages of different particles.

Every day science further verifies the profound saying of Heraclitus which is at the very root of the dialectic: everything is in flux, everything is transformed, everything is in violent movement. In reality, everything that we know from the analysis of physical-chemical phenomena shows that these are prodigiously complex,

prodigiously mobile, and that one can analyze their history precisely. They are opaque only because we have less direct access to them than to history by the very fact of our situation in respect to nature and the experimental intermediaries that we have to use. But precisely because we here all agree in saying that the external world exists independently of any observer, precisely because we think that the movement of this world exists independently of us, it seems to me that we must recognize that the movement itself can be understood only in the terms of dialectic analysis.

I would like to recall here still other examples: the famous works of Morgan on the history of primitive societies used by Engels. The eighteenth century furnished a very great number of examples of partial dialectical analyses of the movement of organic and inorganic matter. There is the celebrated text of Diderot, *d'Alembert's Dream,* which is to my mind a model (given the limitations of its time) of a dialectical analysis of the nature of living beings and of thought. There is also a classic text of Newton, which I will not analyze in detail here, where the latter explains the properties of luminous bodies by linking in an extraordinarily advanced manner for his time (one finds there almost the reflection of the very phrases of Marx on the dialectic), the properties of light, its polarization, etc. . . . with the properties of the matter that emits it.

I would like now to develop the idea that the Marxist conceptions on the dialectic of nature have evolved and necessarily evolve. In Engels' time, outside of the realm of biology on the level of the evolution of the species, totalities in other realms susceptible of being analyzed dialectically were not known. It is precisely the great historical merit of Engels to have sought for such examples in all realms and to have promoted this search. He gave examples that will remain classic, like the qualitative transformation of water into vapor, to illustrate the transformation of quantity into quality.

Today we can go a great deal further, and I would like to develop, since Sartre speaks of it, a theory that is common to a certain number of Marxists and non-Marxists, like Professors de Broglie and Yuwaka: the theory of levels. I naturally do not make the existence of a dialectic of nature depend on this since what is involved is no more than a new inquiry in the course of elaboration.

The point of departure consists in abandoning the idea of the

complete character of the laws of nature and in acknowledging that one can break down reality into an infinity of levels or totalities endowed with their own laws. Consequently there would not exist any theory completely capable of exhausting physical reality.

Let us illustrate this idea of levels in the following manner. When one analyzes bodies that have dimensions in centimeters or millimeters, one could say that they are effectively governed by classical mechanics: this mechanics describing in sum a certain number of finite aspects of the bodies at this dimensional level. As one enters into a realm of smaller dimensions, on the order of 10^{-8} cm. and of corresponding intervals of time, one penetrates into the realm of the theory of quanta, a realm described by a new mechanics which takes account of finer, more complex features of reality. By extension we will likewise have to admit that if one enters into a realm of the dimension of 10^{-13} cm., it will be necessary to construct new mechanics and so on.

This notion of levels immediately applies to geology or to biology. For example, the giant molecules characteristic of organic matter have new qualitative properties (of order and structure) which concretely characterize the chemistry of life.

With this theory of levels, one can say that matter has a history in the strict and dialectical sense of the word, for the material structures we are concerned with have been constituted in time starting from the deepest levels, by successive qualitative leaps. The idea that there is no dialectic in nature comes from the idea (scientifically false in my opinion) that one can arrive at discovering ultimate elements, molecules, then atoms, now elementary particles, with the aid of which one could reconstitute reality. But the progress of science is accomplished in the inverse sense: in the interior of each phenomenon, even if there actually were elementary particles, one always discovers deeper movements and antagonisms. What seems immobile to us at one level is really in flux in the sense given to this word by Heraclitus.

Such a conception at once enables us to recognize the essential traits of the dialectical explanation of movement. The internal antagonisms, that is to say, the assemblage of forces that necessarily evolve along opposing lines, illustrate the notion of contradiction. The unity of opposites is understood as the unity of the elements

of one level which engender the phenomena of the higher level. The transformation of quantity into quality is interpreted as the abrupt rupture of equilibrium in the interior of a system (for example: the destruction of one of the antagonistic forces) that modifies the equilibrium and engenders a qualitatively new phenomenon within which new contradictions appear. So, after a century of the history of science, we once more see the intrusion of the notion of time into the analysis of phenomena, the evolution being more and more extensively depicted in the very terms of dialectical analysis.

Sartre's third question is, in my opinion, an essential one in regard to the new conceptions of the dialectic of nature. This question is the following:

Do we discover in nature totalities (or totalizations) in the sense of historical totalization? Are the parts of the physical-chemical units governed by the whole, for example? For example, is the evolution of quantum and subquantum physics characterized, not only by the destruction of classical mechanics and its postulates, but by the emergence of a truly dialectical area of being and knowledge? If one claims that, is he not letting himself be led by an analogy? For example, are the oppositions of forces within a physical-chemical system true contradictions? Isn't it obvious that the antagonism of historical forces is of another kind than the antagonism of physical-chemical forces?

With your permission, I will generalize this question under the following form, which, I believe, does not distort your thought: *Does one find outside human history, in organic and inorganic nature, at the origin of the movement and the history of this nature, the explanatory elements of historical materialism? What one might call the categories of dialectical thought, the transformation of quantity into quality, the interpenetration of opposites, the negation of the negation, the category of totality, etc. . . .*

In my opinion, the answer is obviously yes, and the fact that these dialectical categories have a specific and particular meaning in the history of men does not at all diminish their applicability to nature. I will go even further: they attain, in my opinion, their full intelligibility and value only in the framework of the dialectic of nature.

Examples abound and I will take only a few borrowed from the

most modern science. First, the category of totality. The history of the sciences themselves shows that I can always abstract in a very general way from the realms (which I will call "levels" further on), which in fact behave like totalities in the dialectical sense of the term.

If human history is a totality, the individual man considered as a psychological whole is another, with his own contradictions, his relations with the external world. Organized beings also behave like totalities which can themselves be broken down into finer totalities, such as the giant molecules. In another realm, on the order of increasing size, there are the great geological masses, the earth considered as a whole, the solar system itself as an infinitesimal element of a galaxy, and finally the galaxies that are considered as physical-chemical wholes and that can be analyzed in their totality, neglecting fluctuations in detail. A particular dialectic corresponds to each of the levels thus demarcated; I will return to this point further on. The category of totality, not reducible to its constituent elements, is everywhere present around us in nature. I will recall as an example the quotation from Szent-Györgyi given by Garaudy.

The qualitative leaps of the dialectic are found precisely in the borderlands where one passes from one state of matter to another, for example, from the inorganic to the organic. The celebrated problem of the origin of life or biopoiesis is analyzed precisely in such terms. I will here quote Bernal summing up the conclusions of the International Congress of Moscow on the Origins of Life:

> From the works of the Russians and Americans comes essentially the idea that life results from a succession of more and more complex states which proceed one from the other in time, and of which each contains the structures and dynamic manifestations of the previous state. In my opinion this division into stages is not arbitrary: since the evolution of life is continuous, no stage could have been completely static but it was not uniform either. To the discontinuities which consist in the birth of new living species, in the further stages of the evolution of life, there must correspond in the essentially biochemical primitive stages leaps like the emergence of sugars, nucleic acids or fats. One of the major problems is to establish the correct order of succession on the base of the actual metabolism and to postulate other stages subsequently

> wiped out by the acquisition of a more efficient biochemical mechanism.
>
> It is clear that one must look in the mineral world for the origin of the processes and the materials of the organic world but life itself is a capital stage in the history of matter: the containment in a limited volume of continual chemical processes.

The relations of the being with the environment are illustrated in a remarkable way by the works of Jacques Monod, which show that different enzymes, such as betagalactosidase, appear in the microbes (colibacilli), following the sugars that are supplied to it, all of these diastases requiring specific inductors supplied by the milieu.

It is correct that for us the oppositions of forces in the interior of physical-chemical systems constitute true contradictions since its constituent terms are elements that develop in a contrary manner and reciprocally condition each other. Movement in the sense of modern microphysics is absolutely not bound up with the simple shift of an inert being from one point to another but is more like a violent oscillating movement that develops at one point to the degree it is destroyed in the immediately preceding position. Each side of this dual process of annihilation and creation reciprocally conditions the other.

It is true, as Sartre says, that the antagonism of historical forces is made up of elements distinct from the antagonisms of organic or physical-chemical forces. But that does not at all bother us precisely because we know that in each realm, or level, the terms of the contradiction that engenders the movement have specific properties.

Again, history is not the queen of the sciences; it is one of the components of the body of the sciences that make up human knowledge. It is contrary to Marxism to make a mechanical transposition from one realm to another. Sartre's criticism does not contravene the conception of Engels and of Lenin. It contravenes dogmatic and mechanistic formulations of Marxism, for example, such as those given by Stalin in *The History of the Bolshevik Party of the U.S.S.R.* The Soviet philosophers would be the first to agree.

I come now to the fourth question of Sartre:

If the idea of partial totality is accepted, can one speak of a dialectical comprehension on the physical-chemical level? More generally, if one takes nature as an infinite totality (in the same sense as Cantor spoke of transfinite numbers), is this forging a concept necessary to the comprehension of movements in the different realms?

In our opinion the answer is yes. The problem that science resolves is precisely the problem of the movement of things. In the physical-chemical realm, this is expressed in the very nature of the mathematical instrument utilized: the differential equations that permit one to deduce the evolution of a system starting from initial given conditions: initial conditions that precisely characterize the totality under consideration. Example: if I study an atom with the aid of wave mechanics, I consider it as a totality by including in my calculations the external world expressed at this level under the form of the given external field.

As for the second part of the question, the answer is still yes, at least in my opinion. The notion of the infinite is actually indispensable, as Lenin first forcefully emphasized, to the dialectical explanation of the world. If nature were finite, it would be reduced to a model, to a machine whose evolution could be foreseen in advance. It would be incapable of engendering anything new.

If, on the contrary, one admits, as the theory of levels does, that nature is infinite, inexhaustible, the appearance of the new, that is to say, of new dialectical realms, does not modify this infinite, inexhaustible character, which constitutes, from the point of view of numbering the levels, the very mathematical definition of transfinite number referred to by Sartre.

I would formulate in a somewhat different way the fifth question of Sartre. It is:

If a theory of levels is admitted, must not one admit dialectical levels, or if one prefers, that the dialectic itself passes from the simple to the complex?

If one admits this, how can account be rendered of the transition from one level to the other? And from the organic to the conscious? Perhaps science will soon discover it for us, but for the moment we only postulate that this transition exists dialectically. Does the theory of levels change anything in the situation? Doesn't the dialectic of nature postulate transitions in their intelligibility and their

necessity? Must not one recognize in this case that one is constructing a dialectic from the outside on the model of a real dialectic and that it is nothing but a working hypothesis?

Here again the answer is yes. The dialectical explanation varies from one realm to the other. Natural science adapts the concepts that serve as the base for the explanatory mode that it proposes to the specific nature of the system studied. The psychology of the individual bases its explanation on contradictory beings of a specific nature. Geology also, and it is the same for all science. . . . Only some especially simple forms of the dialectic can be mathematicized. It is therefore correct that, in concordance with these different domains, the dialectic passes from the simple to the complex. Furthermore, every attempt to limit these laws or to freeze them is contrary to the very spirit of Marxism and to the scientific spirit.

A theory of transition obviously issues from this. I think in fact that it is on this problem that Sartre and we part company. More exactly, we envisage the problem of the passage from one domain to the other from a different angle. In regard to this I would like to make three remarks:

1. The passage from one level to the other, from the organic to the conscious or from the inorganic to living matter, offer problems that are the appropriate object of unanimous interest among scientists. The history of science in recent years has not ceased to register progress in these frontier regions.

2. These advances have all been achieved in the framework of dialectic analysis itself, that is to say, by definition of more and more complex stages which really succeed each other in the course of the prehistory of the higher level under consideration. Witness the example of biopoiesis I gave previously.

3. Far from constituting an arbitrary postulate, the existence and intelligibility of these transitions have permitted important scientific progress, for example, in our knowledge of the structure and mechanisms of the interactions of the giant molecules constituting organic matter.

Of course, these explanations cannot be imposed from without in a dogmatic form, as Sartre says, but result precisely from scientific research itself, which is antidogmatic by nature.

I now come to the sixth question:

Is it correct that there are two schools among the dialecticians,

those who retain the classic point of view (of Engels) and those who wish to renovate this point of view (like Vigier himself) as a result of newly acquired knowledge? They agree only on the monism of being and the unity of knowing but they pose both one and the other as formal and empty postulates.

To this question my reply will be brief: there are not two schools. I do not think that it would be consistent with the scientific spirit to claim to separate the dialectic of nature from the movement of scientific progress. It is therefore impossible for a Marxist, under penalty of renouncing the very spirit of the doctrine, to restrict himself to the analyses of Engels that he himself considered provisional. It is contrary to the spirit of Marxism to want to halt it, limit it, freeze it, or turn it away from the dialectical and materialist analysis of the new facts engendered by the movement of history and the discoveries of the most advanced science. Marxism must by its very nature enrich itself unceasingly: the opposite of a closed philosophy, it is essentially an open philosophy, directed toward the future and toward discovery. In the spirit of the procedure of Marx and Lenin, one cannot conceive the elaboration of a dialectic of nature without permanently supporting oneself on the very movement of science.

I will take an even more radical position: Marxism marks a break in the very history of knowledge and of philosophy. Before it, the attempt was made to enclose the world within the bounds of an *a priori* vision of necessarily finite and limited systems. The attitude of Marx is radically different: the vision of the world must come out of science, be modified and transformed with it. The practice of knowledge, that is to say, science, is indistinguishable from philosophic theory itself. With Marx, science broke into philosophy and the barrier that divided them definitively crumbled.

This brings me to the last question:

Is it not necessary to see in the dialectic of nature a group of postulates derived from the apodictic and concrete principles of the historical dialectic? These postulates will always be less rich, less intelligible, more empirical than what results from the totalization of historical materialism. Doesn't the intelligibility of human history show that the unity of knowledge does not in any way exclude the irreducibility of the sectors and that therefore historical materialism is sufficient whatever the progress of the natural sciences

may be? What this prohibits in any case is the conception of a dialectical dogmatism which would pretend to condition human history in its specificity?

I have kept this question for the end, because I think that it has been clarified by the preceding questions. In my opinion, the answer is *no*. I think that whatever the realm under consideration, the problem posed to knowledge is always the same: to understand the profound nature of the movement of things, not in terms of inert matter submitted to external laws, but in terms of deeper internal necessities, the laws reducing themselves to the properties of things in their dynamic movement. In this sense, historical materialism indeed furnishes many remarkable and concrete examples of dialectical explanation applied to a specific problem: human society. Marx applies to the history of men the same procedure as the entomologist studying societies of ants or bees; both neglect the individual fluctuations. But if it is true that this example is particularly remarkable since it deals with the unique and specific characteristics of what most concerns us: man modifying history—it is not the sole example of dialectical explanation. Nor is it true that the dialectical postulates have historically been abstracted from the analysis of the movement of history. I confess that I do not understand why the transformation of quantities into qualities is more intelligible in history than elsewhere. It seems very clear to me in physical chemistry.

For my part, I do not any longer accept the idea that historical materialism constitutes an irreducible and closed system, independent of the progress of the natural sciences. It is true that the model of explanation given is valid so long as the external factors are not transformed radically. But it must be modified when new phenomena not foreseen in the model appear: the hydrogen bomb, for example.

It is true, and there we rejoin Sartre, that Marxism forbids considering dialectical materialism as a partial application of a more general dialectical dogmatism. Again, it is not we who impose the dialectical explanation on the sciences, it is the sciences that define the specific dialectics applicable to the specific domains considered: historical materialism is the scientific explanation of history.

In conclusion I would like to pose two questions to Sartre:

The first question: Given the very nature of dialectical explana-

tion, that is to say, the explanation of the movement of a totality resting on its internal contradictions and its relations with the external world and from the obvious fact of the real movement of things, doesn't he think that there is a correspondence, an equalization between the real objective nature of the movement of things, and the explanation that we give of this movement with the aid of dialectical models?

If you wish, I could formulate this in a more philosophical language: Is there a correspondence between the real dialectical movement and the dialectical explanation that we give of it (the reflection in our consciousness)? It being well understood that the word "reflection" must not at all be interpreted in the passive sense but conceived as expressing a living dialectical correspondence. We are, moreover, all in accord to give it this meaning; all mechanical assimilation with the reflection in a mirror is excluded.

The second question: Does Sartre accept the idea of partial totality, of partial realms in nature, the evolution of which would be governed by specific dialectics as we have tried to define it in the theory of levels: the different realms interacting equally in specific ways in accordance with the realm considered? If he does, and under this form, can one not consider that the unlimited ensemble of these realms and of their interactions constitutes the real and living dialectic of nature of which our necessarily partial and finite dialectic explanations reproduce only limited aspects?

Rebuttal

I would like to say first of all that scientific knowledge is not, and in no case can be, a dogmatism. I am furthermore a little surprised that suddenly, at the end of the symposium, Sartre no longer trusts scientists. In reality, I do not feel any more bothered than any other scientific worker by the crisis of science. Science progresses by means of its crises in the same way as history; that is what is called "progress." Crises are the essential foundation of progress.

The arguments I have given do not bear on this or that specific theory; they bear rather on the conclusions of that which constitutes one of the most important elements of the very practice of humanity: scientific progress. This dominant fact of the acceleration of scientific knowledge and progress disappears, in my opinion, from the expositions of Sartre and of Hippolyte. There are more scientists living today than there have been in all the past history of humanity. Consequently, the domination of man over nature, and the abrupt way in which human knowledge radiates and accelerates today, radically modify the knowledge and vision that we have of the world.

I do not feel at all shut up in a dogmatism or any kind of Hegelianism. I do not at all have the ambition to devour the philosophers, but I think that the old distinctions between classical philosophy and the knowledge of the world that results from political conflict and from scientific knowledge are in the course of falling away to the advantage of the emergence of a universal science. Perhaps I have poorly formulated the matter, but I think that this is precisely what marks the break of Marxism with all the previous philosophies. For the first time a philosophy presents itself not as a dogmatism, but with the deliberate will to apprehend all the branches of human knowledge and make of them both an instrument of knowledge and an instrument for the transformation of the world. Marxism is antidogmatism.

Here, it seems to me, is the heart of the debate. The very practice of science, its progress, the very way in which today it has passed from the static analysis of the world to the dynamic analysis of the world, is what is progressively elaborating the dialectic of nature under our eyes. When we speak of a totalization, we do not at all speak of a totalization in the older sense of philosophy or of theology. Nature is really infinite, it is really inexhaustible, there are no limits to what it is at this moment or to what it will engender in the future. The dialectic of nature is quite simply the endeavor of the philosophy of our time or, to speak like Sartre, of the most universal philosophy, of the most encyclopedic philosophy that exists, Marxism, to apprehend the world and to transform it.

PYAMA P. GAIDENKO

Under Stalin, Existentialism was peremptorily dismissed as a worthless and reactionary expression of bourgeois decadence and neuroticism. With the easing of the cultural atmosphere in the past decade, Soviet scholars have been permitted to interpret Western currents of thought in a more rounded and less rigid manner.

Mme. Gaidenko's analysis of the Existentialist concept of man's freedom is symptomatic of this more objective approach. Pyama Pavlova Gaidenko (1934——) was born in the village of Nikolayenka, Donets Region, the Ukraine. After her graduation in 1957 from the Philosophy Department of Moscow University, she did editorial work in the Foreign Literature Publishing House. She specializes in the study of Existentialism. She has recently written *Existentialism and the Problems of Culture*, criticism of the philosophy of Heidegger, Moscow (1963).

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EXISTENTIALISM AND THE INDIVIDUAL

One of the crucial problems of twentieth-century bourgeois philosophy is the problem of the individual. There are in fact a number of philosophical schools which consider the problem pivotal, and the immense volume of literature on the subject is itself proof of the keen and widespread interest it commands.

Max Scheler, prominent exponent of the so-called *Kultursoziolo-*

gie in German philosophy, writes: "In a sense all pivotal philosophic problems may be reduced to the single one of what man is and what metaphysical place and position he occupies within the whole of being, the world and God." Martin Heidegger, founder of Existentialism, phrases the same idea still more eloquently: "No other epoch could have obtained that knowledge so rapidly and easily. But also no epoch has known so little about what man is as ours. In no period has man become a problem to the extent he is now."

The situation which has developed in the bourgeois world may, without exaggeration, be termed a crisis of the individual, a spiritual and cultural crisis in general. The popularity which Existentialism has steadily been gaining is due to the very fact that it poses the problem with extraordinary poignancy, without glossing over the crisis of bourgeois man and bourgeois culture.

No other trend in modern Western philosophy makes it so apparent that the very existence of the individual becomes impossible in a society which today crushes the culture it once created. No other trend poses the conflict between the individual and society more lucidly and incisively. The problem of "one" (the German *man,* a term which we will discuss at more length later), so basic to Existentialism, is neither more nor less than the problem of the individual-society relationship. Hence we see that Existentialism comes far closer to touching upon the actual situation than does conformist liberalism, which tries to bypass the problem all along the line, substituting phrases about man's "conscious control" over himself or about national and international entities that allegedly make it possible for him to be the master of his own fate. Liberalism hopes to reconstitute human relationships and avoid the crisis of the individual by increasing state grants to the populace, by strengthening controls over the quality of goods produced, and finally by electing more democratic governments. Liberalism cannot and will not see that the crisis of the individual stems not from isolated defects in bourgeois society but from the nature of the society itself.

In contrast to the shallow optimism of conformism, Existentialism shows that the modern exponent of bourgeois spiritual culture no longer believes in progress, in humanism, in the salutary role of science or education, in bourgeois democracy, or the ideal of a

human society built on reason in whose name bourgeois revolutions were once made.

On the contrary, the Existentialists attack the concepts of humanism and democracy (Heidegger), belief in science and education (Karl Jaspers), and finally the concept of reason which was the message of the bourgeois philosophy of the Enlightenment. All this accounts for the popularity of Existentialism which, in the words of the West German philosopher Franz J. Brecht, has become "the philosophic fashion of the age."

As a philosophic trend, Existentialism had its beginnings in Germany in the twenties. Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* appeared in 1927 and Jaspers' three-volume *Philosophie* in 1932. *Existence et Objectivité,* an essay by Gabriel Marcel, appeared in France in 1925 in the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale.*

That was a period when the cultural crisis in Germany played havoc with all values and called for their radical reinterpretation, while in a France corroded by cultural skepticism there was acute need for a new world outlook. Characteristically, Existentialism took shape at a time when Europe had been shaken not only by the First World War but by the emergence of Soviet Russia. The pessimistic religious thinker Soren Kierkegaard, whose basic ideas the Existentialists borrowed, became the leading light of Western thought of the period. Rescued from obscurity, Kierkegaard's works were now translated from the Danish into all the major European languages, running into many editions. Existentialism in its early phases was therefore regarded as a Kierkegaardian renaissance.

What lay behind that intense revival? Kierkegaard's religious teachings, born in the middle of the nineteenth century, had been a reaction against German idealism, mainly against Hegel, in whose philosophy absorption of the particular by the universal reached its apogee. Kierkegaard came out against this despotism by the universal and in defense of the individual—the individual who was allowed no place at all in the Hegelian system but was regarded merely as a moment in the development of an absolute spirit.

According to Hegel, historical development proceeds independently of the individual's actions; the inevitability of that develop-

ment paves the way through all accidents and the individual is only a medium for realization of absolute necessity. The individual is free only if, having recognized and accepted necessity—the "mind of history"—he acts in accordance with and not contrary to it. The universal becomes the end, the individual only the means. No one ever came out as strongly against "particularism" as did Hegel, who termed it "the formalism of hollow subjectivity."

The philosophic problem which Kierkegaard raises is indeed a major one; for it is the problem of the relation between freedom and necessity. In the final analysis, Hegel had solved it in the spirit of the Enlightenment: freedom is recognition of necessity. The means of attaining freedom is cognition, reason. Only cognition is capable of converting man from being enslaved by alien and incomprehensible necessity into its master. "The free spirit or the spirit as such is reason," Hegel writes. It is only through the act of true philosophic cognition, wherein subject and object coincide, that man functions freely. This idea—that knowledge is freedom—runs throughout the Enlightenment. Man frees himself of the bondage of necessity, and in order to do so it is sufficient for him to learn that this necessity is the necessity of his own reason, i.e., to cancel out the counterposition of subject and object.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels criticized this Hegelian solution. They pointed out that mere recognition of necessity is not yet emancipation; it is not enough to recognize reality; reality must also be changed, and the change must come not from isolated individuals but from the masses. Criticizing the Stirnerian interpretation of freedom in their *German Ideology,* Marx and Engels pointed out that had Stirner approached the problem of " 'liberation' . . . with the intention of freeing himself of actual chains, it would have quickly become apparent that such liberation must presuppose changes involving not only himself but others as well, and that this in turn would work certain changes in the state of the world, which again would involve himself as well as others." The Hegelian freedom attained via cognition is not yet true freedom, and the cancelling out of alienation in the mind is not yet the reality. All this can only be attained by action.

Kierkegaard attacks the Hegelian solution of the problem of freedom versus necessity from an entirely different position. Hegel

says: freedom can be attained only through reason. Kierkegaard answers: freedom can be attained only in spite of reason. Not only is reason useless as a means for attaining freedom, it is the medium of a necessity which makes freedom impossible. Reason is the killer of human freedom, the killer of the individual. Reason creates the realm of the universal, of necessity, in which there can be no choices between possibilities, and in this realm the human personality is therefore sacrificed.

Protests against solutions of the problem of man's freedom in the spirit of the Enlightenment may be found elsewhere than in Kierkegaard's rebellion against Hegel. In the twentieth century the idea that cognition is not liberation transcends the bounds of philosophy and invades creative writing. Since it had come particularly alive in many of Dostoyevsky's works, Dostoyevsky came to be regarded in the West as one of the precursors of Existentialism. In 1862 he had written the following passage: "Suppose indeed that a formula is some day found to explain our impulses and desires, tell us on what they depend, by what laws they are governed and how they grow . . . in short, a real mathematical formula. Man will then probably cease to desire anything; yes, undoubtedly that's how it will be. Because who wants to desire according to blueprint? Man will immediately turn into a cog in a barrel organ —for what is man without desires, without will and without yearnings, if not a cog in a barrel organ?" And again: "Suppose I for one find myself all explained away one of these days—suppose it is proved that when I thumb my nose at someone I do it only because I am bound to do so. . . . What will remain of me that is free?" Only faith, according to Kierkegaard, can rescue the individual from this vast realm of necessity where he is being converted into a mechanism, a cog in a huge machine. In faith it is man's will, not knowledge, that manifests itself, becoming the very foundation of individual existence.[1]

Faith in God is always, according to Kierkegaard, belief in miracles, in those possibilities which reason destroys. When man sees no way out, when reason tells him his end is inevitable, only faith saves him from despair. "Just imagine," he writes, "that a person has conjured something out of the intensity of his terror-

[1] "Faith demands . . . to have faith contrary to reason. . . ." [Author's note, as are all others in this selection.]

stricken fantasy that is horrible beyond bearing; then suddenly this horrible vision rises in his path, becomes his reality. According to all human reason his end is inevitable. . . . But for God nothing is impossible. Herein lies the whole struggle of faith, the frantic bid for what may be possible. For chance alone leads to salvation."

Karl Marx believes that to liberate man it is necessary, on the basis of reason and science, to alter whatever reality leaves no scope for in the development of the human personality. But according to Kierkegaard the solution lies in annihilating reason, in substituting for it man's active will, which he equates with an act of faith. This being the interpretation, necessity that is real and exists objectively is tacitly equated with recognition of necessity, seen in the form of science.

In following Kierkegaard, the Existentialists consider the problem of the individual, hence also the problem of freedom versus necessity, as the basis of their philosophy. Let us now see to what extent they borrow Kierkegaard's ideas.

The subject of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* is man, designated as *Dasein,* or "being-consciousness," in contrast to *Vorhandensein,* the "being-presence" or "thing-being." According to Heidegger, man must become the point of departure for the philosophy of Existentialism. Only starting from that point can we approach the problem of the meaning of being, which is the main problem of all philosophy. What then is the difference between Heidegger's interpretation and that of Descartes, who also posits the subjective principle *cogito ergo sum,* or the interpretations given by Kant, Fichte and finally Feuerbach? The need itself to start with man in constructing a system of philosophy is certainly not new and is characteristic of European philosophy in general.

But the fact is, says Heidegger, that until now no philosophers, not even those seeking to make man their point of departure, ever came close to the idea of Existentialist ontology. For to them man as such was not existence but a kind of entity, and in that sense the human personality was identified with a *thing*. The aim of Existentialism, as he understands it, is to perceive man as existence and to posit this interpretation of philosophy's point of departure. What do the Existentialists mean when they say that all previous philosophies have seen man as an entity, a "thing"?

Such an approach presupposes a certain method of thinking, a

certain orientation in regard to the external world. According to Jaspers, it is the method characteristic of the scientific approach. As Jaspers therefore points out correctly enough, the scientific approach consists of looking at an object objectively, as it exists of itself, abstracted from the function it may exercise with respect to man. When considering an object scientifically, man must become detached from himself, and the better he succeeds in this the less he identifies with the object under study, the closer he comes to the truth. The scientist's thinking is thought separated from the thinker. Man here becomes a moment in time, the means through which the objective truth is revealed unto itself: it is to this role of a means to an end that man's role in science is confined, Jaspers claims. The Hegelian system in which cognition is represented as self-cognition of the absolute spirit is, in his opinion, the most consistent expression of the idea of scientific, i.e., objective cognition.

Such an approach inevitably implies the thinker's relationship to the object of his thinking as to something opposite—it implies that selfsame subject-object relationship which in traditional philosophy is considered basic to all thinking. Hence even when man is merely considering himself, he of necessity dualizes into subject and object, since exploratory thinking cannot function otherwise than objectively.

But what does Jaspers consider the object of thought? The object is always a *thing,* something opposite to man, external and alien to him. Since man in the process of thinking becomes an object unto himself, he thinks of himself in terms of a thing. The nature of thought, making it impossible to conceive of an object other than in terms of the subject-object relationship, is what converts the entire external world into things. It is what makes thought a thing, an entity, says Jaspers.

According to Heidegger, the traditional metaphysical concept of man as an entity consisting of physical, animal and spiritual elements, a concept dating back to Aristotle, is basically false. This concept, he tells us, culminates in Spinoza, who unsuspectingly gives it its proper name when he terms it *res cogitans,* a thinking thing. The same metaphysical principle is basic to the definition of man as a "rational animal." Here, too, man is from the very first seen as an entity by analogy with other objects in the external

world. "The first humanism, namely that of Rome, in common with all other humanisms which came after it until the present, takes the universal 'entity' of man for granted," Heidegger writes. "Man is the *animal rationale,*" a rational animal. Such an interpretation of man as a thing among other things must now give way to the Existentialist concept of man.

It is easy to see the connection between Jaspers' proposition that scientific thinking is anti-existential, in other words impersonal in principle,[2] and Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel. It is Jaspers' thesis that the personality can be safeguarded only in spite of science, in spite of scientific thinking which is by nature impersonal. Kierkegaard's thesis is that individual freedom may be attained only in spite of reason: either individuality or science; either freedom or reason—such is the dilemma as posed by Existentialism.

Such a clear-cut interpretation of the problem enables us to see that both Kierkegaard and Jaspers base their reasoning on the following premise: the obstacle to the development of the human personality, the obstacle to human freedom is not without, but within man; the necessity which prevails is the necessity of man's own reason, his own thinking. It is not in social relationships that one should look for the causes impeding "the development of man's intrinsic forces" (Marx), but in the workings of human reason which shackle man by creating science. That is why, according to the Existentialists, liberation of the individual is to be attained not through reorganizing those relations among people which have en-

[2] It is not Jaspers alone who tries to represent science as a "work of man," the existence of which becomes incompatible with the existence of the creator himself, i.e., with the human personality. This rebellion against science is also characteristic of other trends in twentieth-century philosophy. Thus William James, a major exponent of American pragmatism, writes in this connection: "The only complete category of our thinking . . . is the category of personality, every other category being one of the abstract elements of that. And this systematic denial on science's part of personality as a condition of events, this rigorous belief that in its own essential and innermost nature our world is a strictly impersonal world, may, conceivably, as the whirligig of time goes around, prove to be the very defect that our descendants will be most surprised at in our own boasted science, the omission that to their eyes will most tend to make *it* look perspectiveless and short." (William James, *The Will to Believe* [New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917], p. 327.)

slaved the individual and converted him into a thing, "into a commodity alongside other commodities" (Marx), but by coming to understand that reason and science, instead of liberating man from blind necessity, actually foster necessity. It is precisely this kind of reasoning that Marx had in mind when he wrote: "Since, according to the young Hegelians' own fantasy, people's relationships, their actions and behavior, their handicaps and limitations, are all products of consciousness, the Hegelians are consistent when they make the moral demand that people substitute for their current consciousness a humane critical or egotistic consciousness, and thus eliminate whatever now constrains them. This demand for changing man's consciousness reduces itself to a demand for interpreting existence in a different way, which means recognizing it by giving it a different interpretation."

And indeed in order to liberate himself man must, in the opinion of the Existentialists, see himself differently than he has done until now. His new consciousness will then reveal to him the true way of being. This differentiation between the two modes of being, the true and the nontrue, the real and the nonreal, is one of the pivotal concepts of Existentialism. Different from each other as are the systems evolved by Heidegger, Jaspers and Jean-Paul Sartre, they all pose the problem the same way. Let us see how Heidegger handles it in *Sein und Zeit*.

If man's interests and activity are directed outside himself, toward the objects and processes of the external world, he will exist steeped in the thing-world, says Heidegger; and it becomes immaterial whether his relationship to the world is theoretical or practical. At first the outward orientation is manifest merely as something practical and the object as something "convenient." Only when man's manipulations of things and his utilitarian attitude toward them has been replaced by contemplative orientation does the existence of things begin to be seen beyond their mere "convenience," and a theoretical attitude toward objects is evolved.[3]

[3] Clearly, man's practical attitude toward the world antedates the theoretical one, according to Heidegger. This approach in itself is correct. In general, attempts to derive theoretical attitudes toward the world from the practical ones as essentially primary are characteristic of twentieth-century bourgeois philosophy. Apart from certain trends in pragmatism, the philosopher who emphasized the precedence of the

Philosophy, according to Heidegger, has never known any other mode for man's existence than immersion in the thing-world, just as it has known no other attitude toward objects than the subject-object relationship. He further believes that Existentialism has discovered an entirely new way for man to be, a way that is neither theoretical nor practical, and that this is the true mode of *existentia,* or being. This "true" orientation consists of existence turning in on itself, turning toward its own potential. It is not orientation toward externals but orientation toward self that constitutes actuality in existence. Such is the point of departure for Existentialist philosophy: only ability to differentiate between "true" and "non-true" being makes it possible for man to understand what existence actually is; this difference represents the completely new principle which distinguishes Existentialism from all other anthropological philosophies.

But is this principle really so new? Had it not been set forth long before Existentialism was born? The answer sheds light on the basic tenets of all Existentialist philosophy. The principle of differentiating between man's true and nontrue being, along with all the many germane problems touched upon by Heidegger and Jaspers, is part of the Christian philosophy and was in fact Kierkegaard's thesis, stated in almost the same terms as those used by Heidegger.

Man's nontrue mode of existence, his absorption in the thing-world, is what Heidegger calls the existence of "one," or *man,*[4] that impersonal and faceless "someone" who determines commonplace existence with all its typical habits, concepts, opinions and values. To understand what is meant here, let us again turn to Jaspers' writing on the essence of science. Jaspers points out that impersonality is a feature of the scientific approach. But science is not after all the only sphere in which man's activity is divorced from himself; the entire realm of political life, the legal relations in

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practical approach was Henri Bergson. His concept furnishes an example in favor of the fact that recognition of practice as an element logically antecedent to theory does not by any means lead to the materialist concept of man and the materialist theory of cognition.

[4] *Man,* the subject in impersonal sentences in German, equivalent to the English word "one" or "they" and the French *on,* is one of the main categories in the Existentialist philosophy of Heidegger and Jaspers.

which man acts according to set standards and prescribed rules of conduct are all part of that colorless commonplace existence where the personality becomes obliterated.

"We enjoy ourselves as 'they' enjoy themselves (*wie man geniesst*); we read, observe, judge literature and art as 'they' observe and judge. . . . 'They,' which is indefinite and at the same time All, prescribe the commonplace patterns of daily living." [5]

In this sphere of the commonplace man is not an individual but rather a thing, not the subject of activity but rather the subject of the activity of something outside himself and alien to him, of that "one" which is the subject of activity. Man does not act but is acted upon; he becomes a means, a moment in the activity of something universal. Within the sphere of the commonplace every individual becomes commonplace, average. The commonplace is constantly on the *qui vive* for "every outstanding exception, and quietly cuts it down. Everything basic . . . is steamrollered as something long familiar. Everything attained in struggle becomes merely a convenience. Every mystery loses its mysterious quality." [6]

What we actually have here is a picture of human relations in bourgeois society, a picture which Marx outlined a century ago. It was Marx who first pointed out that in capitalist society man becomes a thing and relationships between people are determined by those among things—"the relations connecting the labor of one individual with that of the rest appear not as direct social relations between individuals at work, as what they really are, but material relations between persons and social relations between things." [7] This is the crux of Marxian criticism of capitalist society. Marx rebelled against capitalism chiefly because capitalism crushed the personality and converted it into a thing. Yet Marx showed that the cause of this could be eliminated, and indicated the means to attain this end. "The conversion of the individual-relationship into its opposite, the pure thing-relationship . . . is a historical process and at different stages of development takes on different, more and more pronounced and universal forms. In the present era, domination of thing-relationships over individuals, suppression of indi-

[5] Heidegger, *Being and Time.*
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] Marx, *Capital.*

viduality by accident, has assumed the sharpest, most universal forms possible and has thus confronted modern man with a well-defined task. The task is this: instead of permitting relationships and accident to dominate over individuals, to establish domination by the individuals over accident and relationships. . . . This task, dictated by contemporary relationships, coincides with the task of organizing society on a Communist basis." [8]

In contrast to Marx, the Existentialists believe that the alienated (or nontrue, to use their language) mode of being is rooted in the very nature of man; man recedes into the world of the commonplace in order to escape from himself. But, according to the Existentialists, what is it that makes man turn away from his true being and plunge into the world of external commonplaces, what causes him to regard the world of things and not himself as the end unto itself?

True existence, the Existentialists claim, is all but unbearable. In the world of commonplaces the individual lives as "one" lives (*wie man lebt*); responsibility for his actions lies not with himself, but with "one" (i.e., with "them"), for while living in such an environment, man the individual is not free in his actions, but obeys certain laws, precepts, dicta of public opinion, etc. When on the other hand he leaves the world of the commonplace, he is guided by nothing external either in his actions or decisions; he must make his own choices, decide for himself, be guided by his inner "I," his conscience, so that full responsibility for his actions devolves on himself. Being free, he becomes responsible for everything he has done; he is guilty of every wrong he has committed. He acts as an individual, a person, the subject of his own actions. But to be free, to be a person, is far more difficult than to withdraw into a humdrum world where there is no need for the individual to make his own decisions, to be responsible to himself. The individual cannot bear his own freedom, cannot bear responsibility, and therefore tries to avoid it by escaping into the "day-by-day commonplaces."

The whole question is thus shifted onto a purely moral plane; the world of thing-relationships between people, in which the individual must of necessity live within bourgeois society, proves to be a timeless mode of existence; man tries to immerse himself in the

[8] Marx and Engels, *Collected Works.*

sphere of the humdrum unless he has the courage and the determination to suffer his freedom. Therefore it is not reorganization of the social relationships themselves, not changes in the mode of production, but alterations in man's consciousness that will restore him to true human existence and will again convert him—this *thing* he now is—into an individual.

How may the individual extricate himself from the sphere of the commonplace and turn toward himself? The only remedy, according to Existentialism, is to dare fearlessly to face death, that final limit which ends all existence. This view of death as a means of the transition from nontrue to true being has been borrowed from Christian ethics. Not only such Christian Existentialists as Jaspers and Marcel, but also those who, like Heidegger and Sartre, consider themselves atheists, espouse the thesis of "being oriented toward death" (*Sein zum Tode*). That Existentialist proposition is generally regarded in our literature as proof of its pessimistic character, of its being a philosophy of despair, of the hopelessness and senselessness of human existence.

Yet the thesis of death can also be treated on a different plane: it is basic to the Existentialist concept of personality, diametrically opposed to the ideal created during the Enlightenment. The problem of death and its significance predominates in Christianity. Christian ethics places the problem of death at the very center of its teachings on the individual, and that distinguishes Christian ethics from all ethical trends of ancient Greece. All ancient philosophies unanimously tend to counter man's fear of death by reason, to prove that the fear springs from his own ignorance, his lack of true knowledge. Varied as the arguments of the Greek philosophers are, their goal is always the same: to prove the unsoundness of man's fear of death.

For Socrates, as interpreted by Plato in *The Apology*, death is transition either to "nothingness, so that the dead have no consciousness of anything," or ". . . a change and migration of the soul . . . to another place." Neither justifies man's fear of death. Plato holds that the idea of life itself proves the meaninglessness of death and the unsoundness of man's fear of it. To deliver man from this fear, the Stoics point to its universality and naturalness: all things in the world have an end and this is so natural that there is nothing to fear. Those who have learned the stoic maxim—"life

according to nature"—need not fear death, for "death is like the fall of a ripe fruit from a tree." [9] The Epicurean philosophy is the most clear-cut of all in this respect. Epicurus too seeks to deliver man from the fear of death, which he sees as the main obstacle to human happiness, to serenity. Epicurus reasons that death does not really exist for man, therefore there is no reason to fear it. "Become accustomed to the belief that death is nothing to us . . . so long as we exist, death is not with us, but when it comes, then we do not exist. It does not then concern either the living or the dead. . . ." [10]

As soon as it comes into being, Christianity sets forth a concept of death diametrically opposite to the views of the ancient Greeks. The Greeks placed such a high valuation on human reason, they felt it was possible to overcome even man's fear of death via reason. With the aid of reason they tore the veil of mystery from death and death ceased to be fearsome; but Christianity made of it a mystery that defied reason. From the outset Christianity condemned the rationalistic tenor of Greek thought; overcoming man's fear of death via reason was and is, according to Christianity, sheer delusion; and this delusion, as Augustine and later Kierkegaard insisted, far from elevating man actually conceals from him his true destination and his true "I." With Augustine, just as with the Existentialists, fear of death becomes inherently human and symbolic, leading in the final analysis to the understanding that true being is being in God—or, according to Heidegger, that which enables man to turn toward himself and "listen to being." Kierkegaard, following Augustine, holds that Greek philosophers were only able to set themselves the problem of overcoming man's fear of death via reason because they failed to understand the innermost workings of the human personality. In this connection it is worth turning to one of the most popular works by Kierkegaard. *The Sickness Unto Death,* in which he attempts to show the basic difference between the ancient and the modern world views. He analyzes the philosophy of Socrates, whom he considers the first moralist because the knowledge which Socrates sought was, to him, not an end in itself but a

[9] *The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca, Essays and Letters,* trans. Moses Hadas (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1958), "Letters to Lucilius," pp. 170, 176, 259.

[10] Epicurus, *The Extant Remains,* trans. Cyril Bailey (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1926), "Letter to Menoeceus," p. 85.

means without which it was impossible to live a good life. According to Socrates, he who does wrong is simply ignorant; it is sufficient for a man to know the truth; he will then act accordingly and become good. Good is knowledge, evil is ignorance. This concept of good and evil is, according to Kierkegaard, typically Greek. "What determinant is it then that Socrates lacks in determining what sin is?" he asks. "It is will, defiant will. Greek intellectualism was too happy, too naive, too aesthetic, too ironical, too witty, . . . too sinful to be able to get it into its head that a person knowingly could fail to do what was good, or knowingly, with knowledge of what was right, do what was wrong. The Greek spirit proposes an intellectual categorical imperative." [11]

It is not difficult, he says, to establish the connection between the doctrines of overcoming the fear of death and the Socratic proposition that virtue can be learned. Basic to both is a rationalistic interpretation of man; the most important aspect of man—and all Greek philosophers from Socrates to Epicurus concur on that point—is his reason. Only the Christian consciousness, according to Kierkegaard, came to realize that virtue is determined by man's will, not by his reason—"sin does not consist in the fact that man has not understood what is right, but in the fact that he will not understand it, and in the fact that he will not do it." [12]

Will, not reason, as was assumed by the ancient Greeks, is what distinguishes man from the animal, Kierkegaard claims.[13]

The basis for the human will is the distinction between good and evil. Man is free inasmuch as he knows good and evil or, to put it differently, inasmuch as he is able to choose between them.

Thus Existentialism bases the personality in will. The recipe which Socrates offers to make man virtuous as well as the recipe which Epicurus offers to deliver man from the fear of death are valid only for the ancient Greeks, not for moderns, declares Heidegger, echoing Kierkegaard. The ancient Greeks and modern man are both afraid of death, but in different ways: the Greek fears possible agonies in afterlife, and to reassure him, Epicurus argues that death is the destruction of the individual, nonexistence. What the Chris-

[11] Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1953), pp. 220–21.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 226.
[13] Here it is clear that the criticism of Greek philosophy by Kierkegaard has the same basis as his criticism of Hegelian philosophy.

tian is afraid of is this very destruction of his "I," his personality. He is afraid of nonexistence, says Kierkegaard, and if this aspect of the problem did not exist for the ancient Greek, it was precisely because he was not an individual. Kierkegaard feels that man actually comes into his own as an individual only with Christianity. Greek antiquity did not recognize the individual and therefore it could not understand the significance of death as the destruction of the personality.

When ancient Greek culture was taking shape, the personality, the individual, was comprehended differently from when the Christian religion took root. The very existence of the Greek *polis,* where every free citizen was conscious of his connection with the whole, of the society in which he lived, conceptualized the personality as an element of the integral gens. The individual was seen as belonging to a certain social entity and it was unthinkable for him to be outside it, and this is reflected in the actual society-individual relationships of the time. Such a concept of the individual may lead to optimistic ethics which Kierkegaard calls heathenish. To the Greek philosophers it furnished the groundwork for their doctrine of death being something unimportant, since for humankind as a whole the death of an individual was a necessary moment in its continuity.

Christianity came into being after the ancient *polis* had been destroyed and when man was no longer cognizant of himself as part of the social whole; Christianity spread through the Roman Empire, where man had been cut off from that social whole to which he once belonged. Therefore in Christianity the personality is no longer intrinsically connected with society and sees itself as solitary in an alien world. The real individual-society nexus has since been replaced with an illusory communion with God; but this communion is to be realized only in the next world, while in the world of reality the individual remains alone.

Thus we see two cardinally different concepts of the human personality. The ancient Greek concept, an optimistic world view finding expression also in German classical idealism, was revived during the Enlightenment: in Hegel, who interprets the individual as a moment in the development of the whole, the attitude toward death is essentially Platonic. Existentialism as expounded by Kierkegaard rebels against the ethics of ancient Greece with its humanistic concept of the personality; Heidegger has a similar

attitude toward German classical idealism. Both recreate Christian ethics much as it was with Augustine. This is no accident.

Existentialism developed when the individual in the capitalist world had not only been uprooted and cut off from the social whole but was also aware of himself as something alien to this whole and even inimical to it. Marx was the first to show that man in capitalist society was alienated, divorced from society and in opposition to it. The cause of this, according to Marx, lies in that capitalist production relationships lead to labor, the very basis of human society and the human personality, being converted into "alienated" labor. "Man's alienated labor, by alienating him from nature, from himself, from his own active functioning, his vital activity, thereby also alienates him from *the gens:* it perverts the *life of the gens* into a mere means for maintaining the life of the individual. First of all it alienates the life of *the gens* from the life of the individual and secondly it makes the life of the individual, taken in its abstract form, the aim of the life of *the gens,* again in an abstract and alienated form." While criticizing capitalist society Marx points out that there is a way out of this situation in which the very existence of man as an individual becomes impossible, for he is converted by capitalist relationships into a *thing,* a commodity alongside other commodities.

Existentialism likewise reflects the position of the individual in capitalist society, but it cannot and will not see any real way out of this situation and substitutes an illusory escape, just as Christianity does. Furthermore it is precisely man brought up in capitalist society, man divorced from the social whole and counterposed to it, whom Existentialism considers the true individual, declaring that neither Greek antiquity nor Europe during the Enlightenment understood or knew the individual as a human personality.

Espousing the Christian theology of Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Jaspers claim that only when facing death does man turn toward himself, toward his *existentia* and away from the world of things, away from the commonplace. Exactly as in the Christian religion, "true existence" in Existentialism is existence in the face of death.

In other words man's "true being," which Heidegger regarded as his own discovery and wants to serve as the point of departure for solving the central problem of his philosophy, the meaning of

being, is nothing more than the Christian concept of the "true life" of the individual, that life in which he communes with God, in contrast to his "false life" in the sinful world. *Memento mori* is a reminder of God in Christian religion; in Heidegger it is a reminder of *existentia*.

Thus, we have two diametrically opposite concepts of the individual: on the one hand the ideal of the individual as conceived in the ancient Greek world and reflecting the real position of the personality, incorporated in the social whole—the ideal embraced by the philosophy of the Enlightenment; and on the other, the concept of personality as isolated from society and counterposed to it.

The classical example of the interpretation of the personality during the Enlightenment is Spinoza's *Ethics,* whose every proposition is directly opposite to its Existentialist counterpart. Jaspers and Heidegger claim that man can never be free in a society which plunges him into the impersonal sphere of the commonplace, and that freedom can only be attained in solitude, when man acts from his own inner impulses and is responsible for his actions. Spinoza postulates something directly opposite. "A man who is guided by reason is more free in a state where he lives according to common law than in solitude where he is subject to no law," Spinoza writes. Genuine freedom is freedom in the face of death, the Existentialists say, for it is only then that man is completely alone. Therefore thoughts of death lead toward true being, toward freedom. "A free man . . . thinks of nothing less than of death," Spinoza writes, "but his wisdom is a meditation of life." [14]

Existentialism brings into the open the question of the crisis of bourgeois culture, inasmuch as it shows the incompatibility of existing social relationships with the freedom of the human personality; but it suggests the individual's awareness of hopelessness as the way out of the situation. In this respect Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* [15] is characteristic.

Sisyphus, who incurred the wrath of the gods, was as we know condemned to roll to the top of a hill a huge stone which rolled down again as soon as he approached the summit. Thus he went

[14] *Spinoza's Ethics,* trans. Andrew Boyle (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959), pp. 190, 187.

[15] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays,* trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage, 1961).

on forever, unable to attain his aim. "There is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor," Camus writes, making Sisyphus fully aware of this hopelessness. "Where would his torture be, indeed, if at every step the hope of succeeding upheld him?" [16]

It is no accident that Camus chooses Sisyphus as his hero. His futile labors are meant to symbolize human life in general. Every human life is as terrible in its futility as Sisyphus' labors. All the ideals of the Enlightenment that spiritually nourished the rising bourgeoisie and gave meaning to its activity: the ideals of democracy, humanism, freedom, equality and fraternity, have all proved illusions; these old idols have been swept away by the realities of present-day capitalist society, and no new idols have appeared in their stead. The world has been made senseless, says Camus, the follower of Heidegger. Human existence has been made senseless.

But the very senselessness of this existence must endow it with new meaning, and this is the pathos of Camus' book. Sisyphus achieves happiness in a vigorous assertion of the hopelessness of his efforts, which he fully understands. He "knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn." [17]

With utmost lucidity Camus outlines the real meaning of the basic proposition of Existentialist ethics: man is free only in the face of death. But death is the destruction of all meaning, the negation of everything man lives by. Death shows us the absurdity, the senselessness of our existence. Freedom in the face of death, happiness in the awareness of senselessness, are two aspects of the same thesis. Yet such a solution to the problem of the human personality fails to satisfy even those bourgeois philosophers who espouse Existentialism. Therefore some of them, veterans of the movement incidentally, now seek a solution on a different plane. No matter what the results of that search will be, the search itself is evidence of the unsoundness of the basic propositions on which the philosophic edifice of Existentialism has been erected.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 89–90.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

VI

ORTHODOX AND REVISIONIST COMMUNISTS

LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI

The Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski (1927——) is the most brilliant and vocal representative of the attempt to combine Existentialism and Marxism in Eastern Europe. A precocious student, an impressive scholar and acute theorist, he heads the section of the History of Modern Philosophy at Warsaw University and edits the monthly journal of the Philosophical and Sociological Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Kolakowski cast off his earlier ideological conformism in the ferment after 1955 and advocated an ethical individualism, which strongly appealed to the insurgent Polish youth. Eleven of his heterodox essays written from 1956 to 1959 have been published as *The Individual without Either-Or: On the Possibility and Impossibility of Being a Marxist* (German translation, Munich, 1960). The title alludes to the problem of how to remain a Marxist without yielding to either Stalinism or bourgeois reaction.

Kolakowski distinguishes between *institutional Marxism* as a set of official dogmas not to be questioned until political authorities change them and *intellectual Marxism* as an attitude and method that is resolutely "revisionist," that is, susceptible of modification in the light of new discoveries and developments. He regards epistemology and ethics as the "underdeveloped" areas of Marxist theory.

Responsibility and History has been his most ambitious effort to overcome what he considers to be the ethical deficiencies of Communist thought. It aroused intense excitement in Poland and elsewhere when it appeared in four installments, beginning with the September 1, 1957, issue of the Warsaw weekly *Nova Kultura.* Two of these are given here in condensed versions. Kolakowski openly acknowledges his debt

to Sartre, and numerous Existentialist themes—anguish, absurdity, authenticity, risk, commitment, the permanent possibility of tragedy—are to be found in his essays.

RESPONSIBILITY AND HISTORY

1. The Conspiracy of Aesthetes

"You say," says the Intellectual to his opponent, the Revolutionary, "that at a certain historical moment the specific interest of the working class becomes completely identified with the interests of all of mankind and not only preserves all human values but is the only force capable of saving them. But what proofs do you have for this assertion, apart from a vague historico-philosophic speculation? What right do I have, in the name of that speculative dialectic of the future, to renounce at present the highest values of human existence? And experience so far does not confirm your optimism—on the contrary, it shows that this specific interest, as you understand it, is often realized contrary to all human values. And here are examples. . . . The first, the second, the thousandth. . . .

"If you represent a certain historical reality, on what basis do you ask me to affirm it morally? Just because it is a reality? I will not support any form of historical existence solely because somebody persuades me that it is unavoidable—even if I believed in its unavoidability, for which at present there is no evidence. If crime is the law of history, is the realization of this law reason for me to become a criminal? Why should that be so? You do not let me measure your moves with a measuring rod of absolute values because, in your opinion, such values either do not exist at all or are purely imagined. But on the other hand, you yourselves talk about all human values which must be absolute; thus, silently, you intro-

duce into your doctrine axiomatic absolutism in a vague and equivocal way in order to destroy it immediately with equally equivocal 'historical relativism.' With this package you come to me demanding that I should immediately renounce all the highest creations of human culture because your doctrine promises to return them to me intact after an indefinite period of time.

"Therefore, you demand for your own historical philosophy and your own history unlimited moral credit although at every step they both unmask their insolvency. You, who rashly agree to give up everything to the Moloch of current reality in the unjustified hope of having it returned—you do not voice a philosophy of responsibility; he who really wants to be responsible for the treasures which human history has discovered and produced will defend them at all costs—i.e., also at the cost of separating himself from the chaos of current struggle if they can be preserved only outside the battlefield."

"But it is noteworthy," the Revolutionary remarks at this point, "that you know how to save these eternal values only together with your own person. It is also strange that, doubting my historical ground, you do not notice at all the direction at which the other side of history is aiming, of whose existence there is no doubt. Pyres of books are on fire there. What did you do to save them? Do you think it will be enough if you yourself learn them by heart? There, intestines are torn from bellies and faces are trampled by heavy boots. What did you do to prevent this? Perhaps you think that you will achieve something with your sermons about universal love, preached to fully armed soldiers? That you will extinguish fire by repeating the ten commandments?"

The Intellectual answers:

"Pyres are burning on both sides of Mount Sinai. Do you want me to count them to compute your moral superiority? It would be a miserable victory. You constantly tell me that the threat to human freedom is so huge that, in order to overcome it, it is worth while to give up freedom; you constantly repeat to me the slogan of Saint-Just: There is no freedom for the enemies of freedom. To a certain extent, I am ready to agree. But I must know who determines the division of men into enemies of freedom and defenders

of it. Always somebody who considers himself in one of the camps, i.e., somebody who in a trial is simultaneously a litigant, judge, prosecutor and in addition a policeman, all in one person. My engagement, to which I am constantly forced, must therefore be based on absolute confidence in that man, in his present and his future intentions. That is, I should have a total confidence in him which I can hardly have in myself. On what basis could I afford an act of that total confidence toward men who in a conflict in which they are among the litigants always want to be the judges, too—that is, to deny the eternal and most elementary principle of justice—and who never agree that the controversy between them and their enemies should be resolved by anybody but themselves? And nevertheless a judge, if he is to pronounce one of the sides right, in accordance with justice, must be impartial before he comes to court, that is, he fulfills his functions properly only when he uses the same measuring rod of abstract justice on the arguments of each of the participants in the controversy. However, you refuse me this right, maintaining that I must first be on your side in order to judge justly, that is, that I have a right to be judge only when at the same time I am a participant in the trial.

"It is true that you have a separate theory to justify this abhorrent rule, namely, the theory of the nonexistence of a third force in a society torn by class antagonisms, i.e., a theory according to which the office of the judge in the interpretation of modern legislation is entirely impossible. You consider your theory to be obvious and you ask me to recognize it, and you add that by the very fact of rejecting this theory, by the very wish to take the position of judge in the controversy, I automatically place myself in the camp of your opponents. In other words, if I recognize the possibility of the existence of a third force I am immediately classified by you as an antagonist and as such morally deprived of the right to judge your arguments—because then I am a participant in the trial. I can avoid this only when I recognize the theory of the nonexistence of a third force and accept your point of view. I have a right to judge and understand you only when I am one of you.

"Don't you see that in this way you use the same arguments that were used by Soren Kierkegaard in defense of Christianity, saying that in order to understand Christianity it is first necessary to ac-

cept it? You say the same thing: In order to understand you it is first necessary to accept your arguments. You must see that this is a demand that is unacceptable to any rationalist in the world, because rationalism, among other things, consists of refraining from choice until the arguments have been weighed. Your postulate, on the other hand, requires me to accept your arguments before granting me the right to investigate them, and it is, therefore, a manifestation of total irrationalism, against which I am warned by the whole experience of European culture. I do not deny that with such methods of action you may win many followers, but realize that you can never win them by intellectual means; your position is completely opaque, it is impenetrable to rational thought because it rejects *a priori* any criticism as an act which, by the nature of things, is hostile to you and is of necessity—consciously or unconsciously—made from the position of the opposite camp. Your theory of the nonexistence of the third force is therefore basically irrational and unacceptable to sensible beings.

"And if you say that I protect the unchanging values of culture, ridiculed by you, together with my own person, and if for this reason you want to unmask me before my audience as an aesthete in love with himself, my answer is: I have no intention of becoming a scoundrel solely in order to demonstrate that I do not care whether I am thought of as a decent man."

In turn, the Revolutionary answers: "Your defense is your indictment."

"I do not defend myself," interrupts the Intellectual. "Why does the world, for you, invariably consist of prosecuteıs and accused?"

"I did not invent that world," the Revolutionary continues. "One should be able to face its horrors and not lament over them. You accuse us, revolutionaries, of dividing reality into two sides and demanding engagement on one and only one side. This is as senseless as accusing meteorologists of causing hail and wind storms. The whole history of mankind is proof of our arguments. The second proof is the *de facto* effectiveness of our social action conducted on the basis of such an interpretation of conditions."

"History proves everything that is previously put into it by the historian," replies the Intellectual. "You analyze history, approach-

ing it with a ready-made scheme, and at the end of the study you announce triumphantly that the same scheme emerged from your analysis—forgetting to add that you yourselves put it there first. And the practical effectiveness of this interpretation of the world has not been proved. How far this or that movement is really historically effective can be evaluated only when its era has passed, only *ex post*. Maintaining that you, for the first time in history, are free from limitations which are imposed on man's perspective by his era, you fall victim to the same mystification which you rightly notice about your predecessors."

The Revolutionary laughs mockingly: *"In qua mensura mensis fueritis, remetietur vobis.*[1] You're trying to say that we boast of our own alleged freedom from historical limitations while you yourself are really free from them. After all, it is you who maintains that you control the world of eternal values, transcending history and free from its pressure. We, on the other hand, have a clear realization of the relativity of values—what is more, we are the only ones really to possess the skill of historical thinking which permits us also to watch the present in its constant passage."

"I know," answers the Intellectual, "that you voice the general principle of historicity, but I do not notice that you practice it. I would not accuse you of this and of inconsistency in general if you accepted my assumption as an alternative possibility—the recognition of values which under no circumstances can be erased and the negation of which is an evil in any situation. But you act differently. Your relativity is masked by appearances of fictitious immutability. You have values which essentially change every day and which are pronounced every day as final. This is the worst form of relativity because it buries both historical thinking—the value of which I do not deny—and the unchanging and lasting human achievements. It is a strange cult that professes monotheism but which daily changes the god which is the object of the cult.

"You must notice that we are waging a peculiar discussion. It mirrors quite exactly that fictitious conversation between Carnot [2] and Lavoisier,[3] recorded by Romain Rolland. A certain naivete,

[1] "For with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged: *and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*" (Matthew VII, 2) [Translator's note, as are all others in this selection.]

[2] French statesman and general (1753–1823).

[3] French chemist (1743–94) executed during the French Revolution.

easily noticeable in that drama, does not conceal the analogy from me. Carnot demands from his interlocutor approval for sacrificing the present for the future. Lavoisier answers that to sacrifice truth, respect for oneself and all human values for the future—means to sacrifice the future. I cannot disagree with him. Lacking your faith, as optimistic as it is empty-worded, as to the foreseeability of future things, I cannot know what future results will follow from our present actions. Therefore, I do not agree that great moral and intellectual values should be sacrificed on the altar of objectives the outcome of which is in doubt. On the other hand, I know that, on the contrary, the measures used necessarily imprint a mark on the ultimate outcomes."

"You succumb to deceptive pictures which liberal politicians always paint about the revolutionary movement in order to denigrate it," replies the Revolutionary. "Our doctrine does not leave the whole present to be devoured. The present makes immediate use of the revolution, and thanks to this it is possible to arrange it so that all its possibilities are not exploited but some are renounced for the sake of greater future results. And all the measures which make you so indignant are always a defense against a greater evil. Remember that in politics, a choice between two evils is more common than a choice between absolute good and evil. This is a premise of the present which was not created by either of us."

"I will never believe," says the Intellectual, "that the moral and intellectual life of mankind should conform to the laws of economic investment, that is, that one should expect better results tomorrow by saving today, i.e., use lies for the triumph of truth and take advantage of crime in order to pave the way for nobility. I know that often it is necessary to choose between two evils. But when both possibilities are to a large extent evil, I will do everything to refrain from choosing. In this way I also choose something, if only man's right to his own evaluation of the situation in which he finds himself. This is not so very little."

"But nevertheless, returning to your example, history made Carnot right," [said the Revolutionary].

"I did not notice that," [said the Intellectual].

"In such a case, the condition of any further conversation is to interpret again the whole history of the world, which cannot be

done, especially if we are waiting for a choice which must be made right away, about the completion of this task," [said the Revolutionary].

"It seems that this is to the point. If we are forced to take some immediate attitude to current changes, then we cannot, of course, wait for the uncertain results of historico-philosophical discussions which may remain unresolved for a hundred years. Therefore, our choice will always be best if it is determined by that small particle of certainty which we possess. Lasting moral values, elaborated in the long development of man up to this moment, are the surest support we have if reality demands from us a choice which, ultimately, is also of moral character. In any case, they are more worthy of confidence than any historical science. And this is the reason why, ultimately, I stick to my opinion."

"Whatever happens?"

"Whatever happens."

3. Conscience and Social Progress

In the controversy between realism and utopianism, the arguments against the latter have been formulated so many times and in such minute detail that we shall forego the task of repeating them. However, we will cite the "antirealist" arguments which, for many reasons, seem to us to be currently of greater importance.

Our assumptions are as follows:

FIRST ASSUMPTION: *moral individualism. Only human individuals and their actions are subject to moral judgment.* This follows from the fact that there can be no moral judgment without considering the intentions motivating the act, because intentions are inherent in the actions of the individual man. Thus, it is necessary, in turn, to conclude that moral judgment of an anonymous historical process, and its negative and positive results, is impossible. Social groups or classes also cannot be morally judged, in the strict sense of the term, if by "social class" we understand—and to us

such an interpretation seems accurate—not only a collection of individuals, but a specific social "entity"; that is, wherein the reactions of its human components are determined by the reactions of the class as a whole, and not vice versa. (We will not pursue this problem in greater detail because it is not essential to the following considerations.)

Nevertheless, and in our opinion this point is of major importance, this by no means indicates that membership in a specific group or class, and only this and no other relationship an individual has to the society he lives in, is decisive in determining his moral judgments, or his behavior, which is subject to moral judgment and the range of which is quite variable in history. On the contrary, we are permitted to accept the hypothesis that this determinism is absolute as formulated in the second assumption, although there is insufficient evidence for this (I have in mind here social determinism and not determinism resulting only from membership in a class), and we formulate that in the second assumption:

SECOND ASSUMPTION: *determinism*. Opinions of what is morally good and evil, as well as good and evil in human behavior, are determined by the individual's type of participation in social life. We understand by "participation" both upbringing and the influence of tradition, as well as membership in all social groups from whose interrelations there emerges that unique thing called "personality" (tradition is, of course, also a social grouping, specifically the total number of people who remain in the sphere of influence of a certain type of consciousness shaped before them). We set aside the problem of what part various forms of social life play in shaping moral judgments: how many of them grow from universal conditions of social life as such, and therefore have a *fundamental* nature universally binding; how many originate in specific conditions of class society and therefore are, in any event, extremely enduring in character; how many, finally, result from membership in a definite class, profession, etc. (this last question constitutes a summary of all the major problems of the sociology of morality, and as such is not suited for present consideration).

The essential thing is that these two assumptions are not in the

least contradictory although they are so considered by many moralists. There is no logical contradiction between social determinism, interpreted even more rigorously than we would wish to do here, and the recognition of moral responsibility. From this follows the next assumption:

THIRD ASSUMPTION: *a humanistic interpretation of value*. Although one's recognition of a certain set of moral judgments, as well as one's moral actions, are determined, one cannot, from the knowledge of the conditions determining a man, draw conclusions about the truth or falsehood of the judgments accepted by him. In other words, from the assertion that someone knows that he accepts this or that as good or evil because these or other conditions of life have induced him to do so, it does not follow that this or that is good or evil. Everyone has certain moral opinions, but no one can demonstrate the correctness of those opinions by claiming that they arose out of the influence of these or other external causes. Thus, to say that an individual may be judged morally amounts to saying that others *have a right* to judge him, and this statement has a normative character. Consequently, its antithesis is also normative. By contending, therefore, that determinism, which is a theoretical construct, makes a moral responsibility impossible, we silently assume that moral judgments may be deduced from purely theoretical premises. If we reject the possibility of such deduction, we must recognize that the problem of determinism or indeterminism in human behavior has no logical connection with the problem of affirmation or negation of man's moral responsibility, precisely because such affirmation or negation is not a theoretical construct. Thus, the third assumption eliminates the apparent contradiction between the first and second assumptions. . . .

Nevertheless, the question with which we are concerned is by no means solved, but actually emerges as a problem. Even if it is true that individual conduct should be explained by the historical process, and not the other way around, then anyone who recognizes this truth still remains a mere individual who must at every step make a vital choice and for whom this general knowledge provides no effective instrument in making that choice. Moral choice is made

no easier by the realization that it is predetermined, in the vulgar sense of the term, or by the fact that every component of the alternatives is enmeshed in a specific historical perspective. To be more exact, the choice remains difficult until we imagine that we possess infallible and final knowledge of the laws of historical development, and that we can read the future of the world as reliably as a railroad timetable. Once this insane illusion possesses us, however, we can probably choose much more easily, but at what cost! This cost is based on the fact that the idiocy of daily life is *apparently* overcome by having each of its phenomena fictitiously elevated to the dignity of a general historical category so that it becomes a part of some "universal" of which our cosmic vision consists. For daily life is, by its very nature, tormenting because of the lack of connections between particular events. It is an accumulation of individual situations which have only one thing in common and that is that some of them are in certain respects similar to others, thanks to which we are able to evolve some reflexes and habitual responses, selecting our reactions in what seems like an orderly fashion but in reality doing so thoughtlessly and in a purely conditioned way. In fact, however, a fragment of everyday life is spent and passes so quickly that it is impossible to take note of it, and together with other such moments it creates that hideous void where nothing is real and nothing really experienced, and everything is diffused in a chaotic mass of details. This everyday life composed of separate phenomena which lack substantial connection searches for this connection in mythologies adopted by happenstance, and which are called "the purpose of life." Any individual "purpose of life" is supposed to create that continuity with regard to which every individual fact will seem to be a *modus,* this giving the course of everyday events the appearance of meaning, while, in fact, these events disappear before they have a chance to be absorbed by the consciousness, leaving after them only a sense of meaninglessness. This act of dressing one's life up with the appearance of substance, the superficial glamor of some sort of consistency and coherence induced by subordinating one's life to a single goal, may sometimes succeed. In so doing, it silences the torments of a daily life crushed by the nightmare of one's own absurdity.

Individual life-goals, those fragile mythologies which disintegrate under any external blow, may however be replaced by the armor of the philosophy of history. The consciousness permeated by historiosophical knowledge (which unfailingly arranges all facts according to general "laws," and with the power of thought infallibly penetrates the future) organizes its daily life admirably, like some magnificent edifice where each small part has a perfectly defined function and each is classified in general and overestimated categories. Every fact of everyday life becomes merely an illustration of a specific abstract category. The heap of chaotic impressions of which our existence was previously composed is suddenly transformed into a paradise of pure universals. From the hell of unconnected fragmentary events we move to the charming symmetry of a world where only ideas and symbols exist. In that world there are no individuals, or they appear only as examples of ideas with the mark of their species recorded on their foreheads. In that world we no longer eat bread and butter but we reproduce labor power consciously organized for the purpose of applying it to socialist building. In that world we do not sleep, but we regenerate cerebral tissue to use it for inventive work in realizing the *Weltgeist;* we do not talk to men, but to carriers of ideas who themselves are only delegates of certain conflicting social forces in the gigantic advance of history. Our words are only echoes of ideas and every step has a predetermined objective, identical with that toward which historical progress is also moving with intentions we have discovered and which we know as well as we know the palms of our hands.

In this manner we are removed from the muck of everyday life to the madness of abstract life, as if we were moving from a brothel to a monastery. Social moral consciousness oscillates between two extreme forms, each of which is revealed in the course of time to be the same idiotic illusion. It is also understandable that the defeat of one of these methods of interpreting life immediately pushes one into the arms of the other, a fact easily observed in the most banal experience of life.

However, because we do not intend at present to become preoccupied with all the forms of absurdity we encounter in life, we would like to call attention to only one of them: how can we free the morality of daily life from the nightmare of the philosophy of

history and from those pseudo-dialectics which, by transforming morality into an instrument of history, in fact make history the pretext for disgraceful behavior. With this, we would like to make one reservation: we are not interested in that trivial criticism of the historiosophical world view which rejects this conception on the grounds that it "dehumanizes" the world by theoretically classifying the facts of daily life. In spite of the illusory paradise of ideas in which the historiosophically-educated consciousness moves, it is still more human and less idiotic than the typical everyday life which, in Tuwim's [4] words, is filled "with the torture of weekdays and Sunday boredom."

The danger of building a morality based on historiosophical vision and having meaning only within the framework of that vision does not consist in trying generally to interpret one's own life as a fragment of history, and thus endowing it, even by arbitrary pronouncement, with a certain meaning it does not intrinsically possess. The danger is based on a complete substitution of criteria of usefulness, which the demiurge of history derives from our actions, for moral criteria. The greater the degree of certainty we have concerning the demiurge's intentions, the greater the threat. The sectarian spirit is the natural enemy of the skeptical spirit, and skepticism is the best possible antidote, however difficult to apply generally, against the insane fanaticism of visionaries. This centuries-old truth should be refurbished from time to time whenever historical experiences which demonstrate this truth with particular clarity recur. When one achieves an absolute and unshakable certainty that the kingdom of heaven is around the corner, that the "Third Order," of which Joachim of Floris wrote, is nearing its triumph and simultaneously approaching the final establishment of a new historical era, the ultimate one which "really" gives happiness and is "really" different from all the others, the only one to scotch the serpent's head and put an end to human suffering, when therefore we are hypnotized by boundless conviction that we are on the threshold of some kind of second coming, it is no wonder that this single messianic hope will become the sole law of life, the only source of moral precept, and the only measure of virtue. A

[4] Julian Tuwim (1894–1953), the most prominent Polish poet of the interwar period.

consistent messianist must be convinced that he cannot hesitate to do anything that might help to bring about the new era. Morality, then, speaks in the language of the Apocalypse. It sees "a new heaven and a new earth" and knows simultaneously that before the far side is reached, the four angels will destroy a third of mankind, burning stars will fall, the abyss will open, the seven vessels of God's wrath will be poured over the world, and glory will illuminate the victor who crushes the heathen with an iron rod. The historiosophy of the Apocalypse, of Joachim of Floris and of Thomas Munzer has been revived to some extent in the Communist movement. Although in this latter case it was supported by an honest and prolific effort of scientific analysis, it acted like a messianic vision in the operations of the mass movement. Probably it could not have been different, but awareness of this cannot provide us with a sense of security precisely because we want to prove that out of more or less reliable knowledge of historical necessities, we still cannot deduce the rules of our conduct.

In any case we take note of one of many practical lessons, which states that one needs a certain skepticism in the face of any prophetic philosophy of history which sees the future with excessive certainty. Experience shows that, as Marx wrote, it is still easy to enslave people by an independent historical process.

On the other hand history is not simply an indifferent force, aloof as the gods of Epicurus, but a series of situations in which, irrespective of our will, we are really engaged. If this involvement is to be a voluntary act of individual consciousness, it is also a moral act, at least in the sense that certain other recognized values find expression in it as determining factors.

Thus, our question is as follows: if the morality of daily life cannot be deduced from knowledge of real or alleged historical necessities, should we also defend certain moral values, arbitrarily assumed or accepted by force of tradition, even when in our opinion history turns against them? Shall we, then, propagate an anti-historical morality since we are abandoning a morality based wholly on history?

And this could be the reply: the essential social engagement is moral. Although a great political movement which aims to shape the world in its own image is created by the needs of that world

and is fundamentally oriented by social developments, still every individual's access to this or any other form of political life is a moral act for which he is fully responsible. Nobody is free from positive or negative responsibility because his individual actions constitute only a fragment of a specific historical process. A soldier is morally responsible for crimes committed on the orders of his commander; even more, an individual is responsible for actions committed, allegedly or in fact, on the orders of anonymous history. If a thousand people are standing on a river bank when a drowning man calls for help, it is almost absolutely certain that someone among those spectators will rush to help the man in the water. This quasi-statistical certainty concerns a thousand people, but it does not in the least remove the necessity for moral judgment by that very individual, the one out of a thousand, who threw himself into the river. Experience testifies in advance to the fact that there will always be one such person in a crowd. The essence of this certainty may be compared to a historical prediction in the rare cases when it comes true. However, to be that one man out of a thousand potential rescuers who realizes this prediction based on large numbers, one must carry out "by oneself" an act subject to moral judgment. By analogy: if a social system exists which needs criminals for some of its tasks, one may be sure that these criminals will be found, but it does not follow that as a result of this certainty every individual criminal is freed from responsibility. In order to take upon oneself the role of such an instrument of the system, one must intrinsically be a criminal, one must voluntarily commit a specific act subject to moral judgment. We therefore support the doctrine of the total responsibility of the individual for his own deeds, and the amorality of the historical process. In the latter case we take advantage of the Hegelian idea, but in the former of Descartes'. It was Descartes who formulated the famous principle whose implications are not always apparent at first sight: "There is no soul so weak that it would be unable to achieve absolute power over its passions by good conduct." This means that we cannot justify any of our actions by passion, by the moral incapacity to act differently, that we have no right to lay blame for any conscious act on any factor determining our conduct, because in each case we have the power to make a free choice. This assump-

tion, mentioned above, can be accepted without contradiction on the basis of a deterministic world view, and also embraces all the justifications we might find for ourselves in historical necessity and historical determinism. Neither our own irresistible passions ("I was unable to resist the desire"), nor anyone's command ("I was a soldier"), nor conformity with the social customs ("Everybody did that"), nor the necessities theoretically deduced from the demiurge of history ("I thought I was acting for the sake of progress") —none of these four most typical and common rationalizations of our actions has any value as justification. By this we do not mean to say that these four types of determinism do not actually play a role in life. We only assert that none of them can relieve the individual of moral responsibility because none destroys the freedom of individual choice. The individual act remains in the absolute power of the individual. We follow the main roads of our life on our own responsibility:

> "Nor I, nor anyone else, can travel that road for you,
> You must travel it for yourself. . . ."
>
> [Whitman]

We wish to emphasize we are concerned with *moral* responsibility. A soldier who executed erroneous orders from his commanders, orders which are militarily *ineffective,* is not for that reason responsible for a lost battle. A soldier who, on orders, participated in the mass murder of a civilian population is responsible for homicide. His moral duty is not to obey the orders. Only on that principle was it possible to judge the SS men.

Regardless of which philosophy of history we accept, we shall be judged justly for everything we have done in its name, and for everything which is subject to moral judgment.

It is not true that the philosophy of history determines our main choices in life. Our moral sensibility does this. We are not Communists because we have recognized Communism as historical necessity; we are Communists because we have joined the side of the oppressed against their oppressors, the side of the poor against their masters, the side of the persecuted against their persecutors. Although we know that the correct theoretical division of society is not into "rich" and "poor," not into "persecuted" and "perse-

cutors," when we must make a *practical* choice apart from the theory, that is, a fundamental option, we are then morally motivated, and not motivated by theoretical considerations. It cannot be otherwise because even the most convincing theory is not by itself capable of making us lift a finger. A practical choice is a choice of values; that is, a moral act which is something for which everyone bears his own personal responsibility.

ADAM SCHAFF

Adam Schaff has been the main defender of orthodoxy against the arguments of the philosophical revisionists of Polish Communism. He attacked Kolakowski's *Responsibility and History* in two articles in *Polityka* (Warsaw) on February 1 and 8, 1957. "If a former Marxist (even if his Marxism wasn't deeply rooted) writes today in an Existentialist spirit about the 'freedom' of an individual and his role as an autonomous creator of reality . . . and if he thus finds applause among leftish young people, we have to look for the social roots of such a phenomenon. . . . This is scientific and ideological bankruptcy. Political bankruptcy is closely linked to it."

Schaff dealt more thoroughly—and more coolly—with the theoretical problems posed by the Existentialist influence upon Poland's intellectual life in a series of articles translated under the title of *A Philosophy of Man*. Two of these are reprinted here.

Professor Schaff is the leading personality in Polish philosophy today. He was educated at Lwów University and the École des Sciences Politiques et Economique at Paris before the war. He did scientific work in the U.S.S.R. from 1940 to 1945. He was Professor at Lodz University from 1945 to 1948 and has been Professor of Philosophy at Warsaw University since 1948.

He was director of the Polish United Workers' Party Institute of Social Research from 1950 to 1957 and has headed its Institute of Philosophy and Sociology since 1957. He is a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and the Executive Committee of the International Federation of Philosophical Associations. He has been editor of *Contemporary Thought* (1946–51) and *Philosophical Thought* (1951–56).

His principal publications are: *Concept and Word* (1946),

Introduction to the Theory of Marxism (1947), *Birth and Development of Marxist Philosophy* (1949), *Some Problems of the Marxist Theory of Truth* (1951), *The Objective Character of Historical Truth* (1955), *Introduction to Semantics* (1960), and *Language and Cognition* (1963).

A PHILOSOPHY OF MAN

The Problem of the Individual

In a debate between such contrary philosophies as Marxism and Existentialism—I refer throughout to Sartre's variant, which has played so big a role in Poland—it is necessary to go straight to the main point of their differences. This concerns the concept of the individual, which is the central concept of every variety of Existentialism, and around which are grouped all differences of viewpoint between Existentialism and Marxism.

Does the individual create society, by choosing the manner of his behavior in complete spontaneity and freedom of choice? Or is it society that creates the individual and determines his mode of behavior?—These questions lie at the heart of the antagonism between Existentialism and Marxism. All others, including the problem of "essence and existence," are consequent upon the way they are answered.

Of course, the different points of departure by no means signify that Existentialism completely rejects the role of society, or Marxism that of the individual. But all varieties of Existentialism—which differ greatly in the areas separating Kierkegaard from Sartre—are united not only by the fact that their central problems concern the fate and experiences of the individual, but also by—and, indeed, primarily by—their conception of the individual as isolated, lonely and tragic in his senseless struggle with the alien

forces of the world around him. Involved here are problems hard to grasp and even harder to express clearly.

This standpoint is ordinarily called subjectivism; and that it actually is, despite the Existentialists' protest against such a designation of their position. Only by taking off from the position of subjectivism can one arrive at such a strange and internally contradictory conception as that of the "sovereign" individual, completely free to make decisions which depend only on himself, who is at the same time defenceless and tragic in his hopeless struggle with malicious fate. The internal contradiction that appears here is that between a voluntarist variety of subjectivism and the concept of an objective fate, independent of human activity.

Sartre's reputation is due to his skillful treatment of the central problem of all varieties of Existentialism, the problem of the individual and his complex relations with the world surrounding him. Sartre's has become the most typical variety of Existentialism. This is due not only to the atmosphere of helplessness and despair with which his whole philosophy is permeated, but to the concept which generates this atmosphere—the asocial concept of the individual who, being isolated and lonely, must determine his behavior entirely for himself and, with nothing but his own judgment to guide him, grapple with hostile living and nonliving forces. This is not a new idea, but it exerts a strong appeal in the conditions of moral chaos of the postwar world, in the conditions of the breakup of traditional systems of values while new social values take shape amid conflict and pain. Its appeal is all the greater when expressed by a great writer who is at the same time an excellent psychologist.

But this is only one Sartre. There is another who, in spite of the first, leans toward socialism in his practical activities and toward Marxism in his theoretical work. There is something droll in the fact that Sartre—the Existentialist moving toward Marxism —could in an article specially written for a Polish journal teach something to our Marxists who, moving toward Existentialism, had lost their knowledge of Marxist philosophy and its values. Sartre reminded them that Marxism is the only modern philosophy which has the perspective of further development. I said that there is something amusing in this—but it is at the same time perfectly

understandable. When two contrary tendencies—one away from and the other toward Marxism—intersect at a certain point, they by no means come to an agreement there. They are moving in opposite directions, and cannot agree. This is why an Existentialist moving toward Marxism understands Marxism much better than a Marxist who is moving toward Existentialism.

While fully recognizing Sartre's stature and talents, one should not lose sight of the inner contradictions of his views, which do not decrease but rather increase with the development of his views. There is a contradiction between the Sartre who clings to traditional Existentialism and the Sartre who pays tribute to the philosophy of Marxism. This contradiction can be overcome only by abandoning one or other of the two antagonistic views he now holds. And it is concentrated mainly in his conception of the individual.

The young Marx, whom certain of his "admirers" in Poland wish violently to transform into an Existentialist, wrote in his famous *Theses on Feuerbach:* "The human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations." This statement, aphoristic in form, was directed against Feuerbach, who in Marx's opinion did not understand the social individual and so committed a double sin: (1) against the *historical* conditioning of the individual, whom Feuerbach conceived abstractly as an isolated being; (2) against his *social* conditioning, which Feuerbach conceived in a naturalistic way in terms of the bonds uniting the individual members of a species.

Referring to Feuerbach's views on the individual's religious beliefs, Marx further wrote: "Feuerbach consequently does not see that the 'religious sentiment' is itself a social product, and that the abstract individual whom he analyzes belongs in reality to a particular form of society."

It requires no special keenness of mind to realize that what Marx said hits not only at Feuerbach but strikes with equal force at the mistaken approach to the individual of both modern naturalism and Existentialism.

Marx states that "the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social

relations." This statement goes to the heart of the problem—if we discount the fact that this would not be today the ordinary way of phrasing this thought. The human being, as an individual, is "the ensemble of the social relations," in the sense that his origin and development can be understood only in the social and historical context, in the sense that he is the *product* of social life. This social and therefore historical approach to the investigation of the spiritual life of man and his works is the indisputable and tremendously important theoretical content of Marxism, freeing it from the limitations of both naturalism and Existentialist subjectivism in the analysis of human affairs.

It is important to emphasize this point not only in opposition to Existentialism but also to the vulgarized interpretation of the position held by the young Marx. I have already referred to the causes which led our latest revisionists to plagiarize Existentialism. The same causes led indirectly to the distortion and Existentialist vulgarization of the young Marx. The great enthusiasm of some of our intellectuals for the themes treated by the young Marx—and this is, moreover, a broader phenomenon of international significance—can be explained by their quest for answers to their pervasive question about human affairs, their desire to "humanize" the problems posed by Marxist theory, to saturate these problems with a humanist content, to connect them with the fate of the individual. That theme and its inspiration are, of course, comprised in the works of the young Marx. It is important to deepen one's analysis of this theme, making use of the further development of Marx's thought. But that is a task by no means connected only with the immediate social stimuli which actually propelled the theme to the fore.

The very social causes and spiritual shocks which caused the defection of some intellectuals, formerly connected with Marxism, to Existentialism led to their misrepresenting the tenets of the young Marx in the spirit of Existentialism. When, in contradiction with historical facts, they vulgarized their interpretation of the views of the young Marx, it was by no means with them a question of an objective investigation. It is in this light that one may understand the ignorant attempts, made with such boastfulness and aplomb by our revisionists, to counterpose the young Marx not

only to Engels but also to the older Marx. For such enthusiasts, Marx was finished somewhere around 1846.

And yet it is precisely in the teachings of the young Marx that we find a firm and decisive refutation of Existentialist views on the problems of the individual. The views expressed by Marx on these problems, already expounded in the *Theses on Feuerbach,* and developed in his later theoretical works, constitute a rejection of the theoretical foundations of Existentialism—subjectivism, the asocial and ahistorical conception of the individual.

The internal contradictions of Sartre's views are related precisely to this question. It is not possible simultaneously to pay tribute to the tenets of both Existentialism and Marxism on philosophical problems in general and the problem of the individual in particular, without falling into eclecticism and toleration of contradictions. If one approaches the problem of the individual in a Marxist way, that is, historically and socially, one must abandon the idealist, subjectivist foundations of Existentialism. One must reject the thesis that because the individual must make independent decisions in situations of moral conflict—true, a real problem is involved here—he is condemned to loneliness and consequently to helplessness and despair. On the contrary, Marxism shows that the individual, in making independent decisions and, in a certain sense, choosing between given attitudes and activities, always does so socially, in the sense of the social conditioning of his personality. Marxism teaches that the individual's attitudes are social products, and that, in adopting the attitudes he does, the individual "belongs in reality to a particular form of society." In this light, the "philosophy of despair" has its basis only in the attitudes of certain social classes who lose their so-called eternal philosophical truths at turning points of history. There is a fundamental contradiction between Marxism and Existentialism. It is possible to choose between these two alternative points of view; what is not possible is to combine them into one consistent system of thought.

We may note here that even atheistic Existentialism is much closer to the tenets of religion on the problems of the obligations and destiny of individuals than would appear at first sight. This is the price of departing from the social and historical analysis of human affairs.

I have already pointed out that Existentialism contains a contradiction between the postulate of the "sovereignty" of the individual, who is supposedly the independent creator of his own destiny (in the deepest sense, this is the thesis that "existence" is prior to "essence"), and the whole content of the "philosophy of despair." For that philosophy proclaims that man is a mere pawn in the hands of fate. As Sartre indicates primarily in his plays, evil triumphs regardless of human choosing (this conception perhaps finds its sharpest expression in Sartre's play *The Devil and the Good God*). But this is precisely the antinomy of religious moralists, especially those who derive their morality from the Mosaic religion, of which Christianity is a copy. The Judaic Jehovah and the Existentialist Fate are the one as spiteful as the other: they truly create man "in their own image." They give him, cunningly enough, the power to recognize good and evil, but only so that they may condemn him. This miserable worm, with such means of knowledge at his command as the Ten Commandments, racks his brains as to what to do in life's conflicting situations and lives in a state of discord and fear, only to earn condemnation at the end. And yet this miserable and helpless creature, worthy of both pity and contempt, is in the light of religion the sovereign individual, God's highest creation! Atheistic and religious Existentialism alike repeat the tale of the cruelty and maliciousness of the old Jehovah. They create their individual as supposedly sovereign in order to make him lonely. They condemn to helplessness and despair the wretched puppets who are the sport of malicious fate while wearing the hollow crown of "sovereignty." For it is clear that the separation of the individual from society does not give him any sovereignty. On the contrary, it deprives him of all real independence. This cannot be doubted if one reads Kafka's *Trial* and *The Castle,* or sees on the stage the fate of Sartre's hero in *The Devil and the Good God*. The "philosophy of despair" is humanism inside out; it is in essence amoral morality, dehumanized humanism.

But enough of that. What most concerns us here is that it is actually possible to choose between Marxism and Existentialism, but impossible to combine them into one. Sartre himself will, sooner or later, have to make such a choice. It is impossible to

complement Marxism with Existentialism. This does not mean, however, that to be a Marxist one must give up the *subject matter* of Existentialism.

In his article on *Marxism and Existentialism,* Sartre stated that his Existentialism only fills in the gap which now exists in Marxism, and that the moment this is accomplished, Existentialism loses all reason for existence as an independent current of thought.

It all depends on how the above statement is to be understood. If it is a matter of "completing" Marxism with the theory and methodology of Existentialism, then Sartre's proposition is very doubtful, since fire cannot complete water. But if it is a matter of Marxism undertaking, on the basis of the Marxist method, a more thorough investigation of the problems of the individual, which it has tended to neglect and which have been monopolized by Existentialism, then we have here an important proposal.

If it is true that Existentialism has raised questions which profoundly affect people and we have neglected them, and if it is true that this neglect has had political consequences, then it becomes important to get clear, in the first place, about exactly what questions are involved.

The usual answer is: Marxism has neglected the problems of ethics, and so it is necessary to undertake a comprehensive study of the broad principles of morality. This is true; but it is a truth of the kind that says little. What exactly is the object of a comprehensive study of the principles of morality, and how is it to be done? When it comes to the point, little remains for such studies but fine phrases.

A serious analysis of what amongst the problems posed by Existentialism is of most concern to people today brings two complexes of problems to the fore:

1. the problems of personal responsibility for one's actions, including political action and particularly in situations involving conflicts between opposing moral standards;
2. the problems of the individual's place and role in the world, which have been rather hazily expressed as "the problem of the meaning of life."

These are not single problems, but complexes of problems. They belong to the sphere of the science of morality, broadly conceived; but unhappily they were not in evidence when the traditional themes of Marxist ethics were developed. Because of that, the demand for the general "development of Marxist ethics" cannot be considered satisfactory. For the whole difficulty lies precisely in the question of how the subject is to be understood, i.e., what is the range of the problems of this ethics. By picking on particular problems we shall not, of course, develop a whole theory of ethics; but we may at least say something definite.

When an Existentialist raises problems of the individual's responsibility, he does so in a rhetorical and abstract manner. And this he cannot help. For by removing the problem of the freedom of choice and responsibility of the individual from its social and historical context, he cannot but treat the individual and his responsibility as abstractions. Sartre understands very well the conflicting character of situations in real life which present the individual with a choice as to how he will behave—he has expressed this in his work *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme,* and in his literary works; but he considers this choice as the free act of the individual. We cannot accept this abstract way of posing the problem of the individual's responsibility.

How has this problem actually presented itself to us, arising from recent experiences? The problem of responsibility for one's deeds did not present itself to us in a purely theoretical and abstract form, but in a most living and practical way in conflict between party discipline and one's conscience, and in judgment of those who, not motivated by any personal considerations, were guilty of evil deeds under the conviction that they were fulfilling their social obligations.

Existentialism cannot answer problems posed in this concrete way. Its abstract and subjectivist outlook is useless in relation to such problems. To deal with them requires the development of a whole complex of theories, and first of all the sociological theory of *the individual in society* and, connected with this, the dialectics of personal freedom and the necessities flowing from social determinism. Here we find already a firm theoretical foundation in Marxism. But there arise also a number of more neglected ques-

tions, of which the chief is that of the definition of responsibility in its sociological, psychological and moral aspects. Finally, there arises the difficult problem of conflicting situations and the definition of responsibility in relation to them.

Standard theories of ethics tend to overlook the fact that in real life moral judgments often relate to conflicting situations. So standard ethics simplifies its tasks and promulgates *absolute* solutions of moral problems independently of time, place and social circumstances. All religious systems and most so-called lay codes of morals attempt to do this.

All absolute ethical systems, so called, erected on the basis of supposedly eternal and immutable moral truths, are helpless before the problems occurring most often in life, namely, situations of conflict in which doing what is thought to be right brings about evil consequences. Uncertainty here does not arise because the so-called sinner is ignorant of the moral norm obligatory for him in the given situation; the moralist may come forward with his pompous commandments and prohibitions, but that does not help, because the situation is connected with a clash of contradictory standards and the poor sinner cannot decide which has priority. This may be called an "Orestes" situation. Such situations confound all "absolute" moral systems, religious or lay. Existentialism has the merit of having been aware of the problem, although it cannot solve it. Marxism has the best equipment for solving it, but has so far remained somewhat aloof.

The second main complex of problems relates to questions which are only reluctantly mentioned by philosophies pretending to the name of science. These problems, it is said, are so hazy and so burdened with tradition, that they should be regarded as belonging to the spheres of religion, mysticism or poetry rather than science. Such, indeed, is the opinion of the Neo-Positivists, who class them among "pseudo-problems." But as I have already pointed out, to call a problem a "pseudo-problem" does not abolish it; it merely hands the problem over to those least equipped to tackle it seriously. The traditional mystification of a problem does not abolish either the problem or the possibility of its scientific analysis. "What is the meaning of life?" "What is man's place in the universe?" It seems difficult to express oneself scientifically on such hazy

topics. And yet if one should assert ten times over that these are typical pseudo-problems, problems would remain. Let us therefore consider what is behind the haze.

"Vanity, vanity, all is vanity!" These words, repeated in various forms in all philosophies of the East, seem to appeal to many who in old age begin to reflect on life and death. It is possible to shrug this off with a compassionate smile as nonsense. And yet the words echo a problem which cannot simply be ignored. Nor can the questions "Why?" "What for?" which force their way to the lips of people tired of the adversities and delusions of life. This applies all the more to the compulsive questions which come from reflection on death—why all this effort to stay alive if we are going to die anyway? It is difficult to evade the feeling that death is senseless—avoidable, accidental death especially. Of course, we can ask: senseless from what point of view? From the point of view of the progression of nature, death is entirely sensible. But from the point of view of a given individual, death is senseless and places in doubt everything he does. Religion has tried to counter this feeling of senselessness. The old and very wise religions of the East pointed to *nirvana* as the final goal, thus giving death a clear meaning. Other, more primitive, religions instil faith in a life after death. But what is to be done when religious belief itself loses all sense?

Attempts to ridicule all this do not help at all. The fact alone of some agnostics undergoing deathbed conversions gives much food for thought. Philosophy must take the place of religion here. It must tackle a number of diverse questions which have remained from the wreck of the religious view of life—the senselessness of suffering, of broken lives, of death, and many, many other questions relating to the fate of living, struggling, suffering and dying individuals. Can this be done scientifically, that is, in a way that is communicable and subject to some form of verification? It certainly can. True, not by following the same methods as in physics or chemistry —for this is not a matter of physics or chemistry. This is why the Neo-Positivists are wrong in their sweeping verdict that these are empty pseudo-problems. And so are those Marxists who fail just as dismally to express themselves on these questions, and who cover their scornful silence by concentrating attention exclusively on great social processes and their laws of development. These are undoubt-

edly very important and socially decisive matters. But they do not provide automatic solutions to problems relating to individuals.

Existentialized Marxism

Sartre's latest work, *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* covers 755 pages and is only the first volume of what promises to be a monumental treatise. It must regretfully be stated that, if Sartre were identified only with this strictly philosophical work, he would remain an obscure and relatively unimportant philosopher. What Sartre writes as a philosopher is terribly muddled and communicates little. Although he is a Frenchman, Sartre has managed to embody in his writings the worst traditions of German pedantry and obscurity. His pages resemble, not Descartes or Diderot, but Husserl and Heidegger. Luckily, there is another Sartre, who wields a different pen and contrives as a dramatist to make clear "what the author wished to say." Thus Sartre the dramatist and novelist formerly clarified and popularized the philosophy of *L'Être et le Néant*. Perhaps he will do the same later for his new book—though it is hard to conceive how he will do it.

Let us leave aside, however, the question of the lucidity of Sartre's new book—few philosophers are lucid anyway—and apply ourselves to its contents. The wealth of problems posed compels selection. We are interested here primarily in those which bear on Sartre's relations to Marxism and exhibit the internal contradictions of his standpoint.

Sartre has traveled far from *L'Être et le Néant* to *Critique de la raison dialectique*. He of course continues on the line of Existentialist thought, but arrives at the conclusion—surprising for his creed—that Marxism is actually the great philosophy of our time. In the Introduction he writes:

> I consider Marxism to be the undated philosophy of our time . . . while the ideology of Existentialism and its method of cognition is an enclave of Marxism itself, which simultaneously gives birth to it and denies it.

This introductory declaration contains in a nutshell the contradiction to which my further analysis is devoted.

How Sartre interprets his own evolution toward Marxism is of considerable sociological and psychological interest. He was attracted by the force of the Labor Movement; as an intellectual, he was influenced by the rising class whose consciousness is molded by its own social position. Husserl and Heidegger officiated at the cradle of *L'Être et le Néant;* but in the *Critique* Sartre had arrived at the conviction that Marxism is the philosophy relevant to our time ("undated"). Anti-Marxism, he states, faces the Hobson's choice of either returning to pre-Marxist ideas or of rediscovering ideas already refuted by Marxism. This is an excellent and terse expression of an important fact many times observed in practice. Various critics have believed themselves to be superseding Marx when in reality they were only harking back to his precursors.

Sartre's ideas on revisionism are of interest. The term is, he says, either a truism or an absurdity. It is a truism when it asserts the evolution of Marxist ideas. That evolution is a necessity even for those who wish to be the most faithful disciples, since Marxism is a living philosophy which changes and grows with the development of society. Revisionism becomes an absurdity when it sets out to make a change in philosophy—which in its opinion finds itself in a state of crisis—by calling in the advice of "experts." If there is a crisis, and if any change is needed, that fact reflects a deeper social crisis, which can only be overcome as a result of social development. A revision made by "experts" is only a mystification. This thought of Sartre goes far beyond the shallow but loud propaganda of the revisionist miracle-makers, and in my opinion deserves a deeper analysis.

So we see that Sartre not only avows Marxist philosophy but attempts to defend it from attack. He ends his introductory study with a far-reaching prognosis of the fusion of Existentialism with Marxism.

> When Marxist analysis accepts human dimensions [i.e., the Existentialist program] as the basis of anthropological science, Existentialism loses its reason for existence. . . .

Is this not too good to be true? Doubts are at once raised by what Sartre says in continuation:

> Absorbed, mastered and retained by an integrated philosophical movement, it [Existentialism] ceases to be a particular analysis in order to become the basis of every analysis.

Thus Existentialism will "disappear," not in the sense of being overcome by Marxism, which resolves the Existentialist problems in its own way, but by being taken over by Marxism as the basis of every analysis. This is not a case of "disappearance" at all, but of the promotion of Existentialism to the role of serving as the foundation of all Marxist theory. It is a question of "completing" Marxism by Existentialism.

Is such a "completion" possible without giving rise to internal contradictions within the system?

To a certain extent Sartre himself is aware of contradiction. Indeed, in a polemic with Lukacs he once charged the latter with not seeing the contradiction.

> We were at the same time persuaded that historical materialism provided the only correct interpretation of history and that Existentialism remains the only concrete approach to reality. I do not intend to deny the contradictions inherent in this position. I only say that Lukacs did not suspect them. Further, many intellectuals and many students have lived and still live under the pressure of this postwar exigency. Where does this come from? It results from a circumstance of which Lukacs was well aware but of which he could not say anything at that time: Marxism—which attracts us as the moon does the tides, which has transformed all our ideas and eliminated for us the categories of bourgeois thought—could not satisfy our speculative needs; on the particular ground we occupied it had nothing new to tell us, since it was retarded in its own development.

Sartre is right, of course: there *are* contradictions here. Historical materialism understands human actions and motives as socially conditioned, whereas Existentialism seeks the true source of social phenomena in the autonomous, free individual. These are two diametrically opposed conceptions which cannot be united. Nor was this accomplished by Sartre, who perhaps managed to insinuate a little Existentialism into Marxism while trying to transform Marxism into a variety of Existentialism. It is not surprising that this new system splits at the seams under pressure of its in-

ternal contradictions. In a review of Sartre's book in *Prévues,* under the significant title *Marxism Existentialized,* Aimé Pari rightly remarked that Sartre had sacrificed none of his own doctrines for the sake of the "undated" philosophy, and that his position simply subordinates what he calls Marxism to Existentialism.

The discoveries of Historical Materialism advanced socialism from utopia to science. The discovery of the real mechanism of social development, and in particular of the determining role of the mode of production for the whole of social life, demonstrated the necessity of socialism and identified the social force which could bring it about. The guiding thought of historical materialism, and of the whole conception of scientific socialism, was historical determinism, which interprets the behavior of social classes and of human individuals in the light of the discovered laws of social development. Historical materialism does not deny the role of the individual in history. On the contrary, it strongly emphasizes that history is made by people. But it brings out the role of other factors, which determine in the last analysis why people think and act in one way and not in another. Materialism differs from idealism in understanding human thinking not as the primary but as a secondary and derivative factor in making history. True, in taking up this idea, so-called sociological science failed to digest it properly. Yet the acceptance of historical materialism does involve the recognition of historical determinism and its corollary—the derivative character of the mode of thought in relation to the mode of production. Sartre, however, who declares his avowal of Marxism in the form of historical materialism, rejects what is the foundation stone of that materialism, namely, historical determinism, with its specific conceptions of the laws of social development, of the derivative character of social consciousness, and of the dialectic inherent in understanding the individual as both the product and at the same time the maker of society.

Is Sartre therefore dishonest in his pro-Marxist declarations? Nothing of the sort. It is simply a matter of contradictions in his views and personal convictions. He gets along with these the easier because he practices philosophy "artistically"—which means with complete carelessness regarding the precise meaning of the words he uses. With deep conviction he declares that vagueness should

be the characteristic of every analysis. For the Polish reader, reared in the cult of temperance, clarity and precision of thought—and perhaps for the English reader, too—such playing with words is often unbearable.

Here is how Sartre conceives the subject matter of Existentialism:

> The subject of Existentialism—consequent upon the avoidance of the matter by Marxists—is the individual person in a social environment . . . the alienated individual transformed into a mere object, mystified, who was created by the division of labor and exploitation, but who struggles against alienation with insufficient means and, in spite of everything, patiently climbs to ever new positions.

It must be acknowledged that this is a proper subject for analysis, and we cannot object if Sartre takes this point of departure for his investigation of dialectical reason, since he clearly stipulates that the individual must be understood socially and as socially conditioned. However, when Sartre proceeds from general declarations to the concrete application of his intentions, he arouses serious misgivings. He clearly formulates these methodological intentions in the chapter entitled "Dogmatic and Critical Dialectics."

Here he is concerned with the problem of the freedom of the individual, basic for every variety of Existentialism, which he approaches from the aspect of the relations between the individual and society, the individual and his environment in the broad meaning of the term. There are certain necessities, says Sartre, which the environment imposes on the individual in the form of laws. But the individuals at the same time make history. Such is his dialectic. But inconsistency arises here, since Existentialism desires at all costs to preserve its doctrine of absolute individual freedom—which is at the very heart of Existentialism as a philosophy, and without which it loses its reason for existence. Sartre finds himself entangled in the inconsistencies of an Existentialism which recognizes, at least in words, the social conditioning of the individual personality. And he emerges rather too easily from this entanglement. He simply withdraws with his right hand what he grasps with his left. He recognizes social conditioning and the necessity flowing from it only in order at once to deny it—"dialectically."

This is a poor kind of "dialectic," the defects of which are due, among other things, to the fact that he never even attempts to make precise for himself what he understands by "dialectics" and "contradiction," although he uses these terms incessantly.

> Man makes history on the basis of the conditions he finds at hand. If that statement is true, it definitively erases determinism and analytical reasoning as a method and rule of human history.

The above-quoted argument of Sartre contains an obvious *non sequitur;* for the statement that people make their own history on the basis of given circumstances does not lead to the erasure of historical determinism but rather to the specific interpretation of the mechanism by which that determinism operates. But Sartre desires at all costs to save the "freedom" of the individual, as understood by Existentialism, the conception of which is required to "complete" Marxism. On this conception of "freedom" rests his understanding of dialectical reasoning, which proceeds beyond what already exists to what does not yet exist but is projected by human activity. Sartre speaks of the dialectic of freedom and necessity, of the dialectic of the external conditioning to which we are subjected, as well as of the dialectic which we ourselves create. It is all terribly hazy and inconsistent. But it does express his intention, as does the following statement:

> There exists no dialectic that could be imposed on facts, as Kant's categories were imposed on phenomena; dialectical development, if it takes place, is the individual adventure of the particular object.

This is a poetic rather than a philosophical statement. But its intent is clear. Talk as much as you like about "social conditioning," but without the "freedom" of the individual, in the sense of his being free from the action of determinism, Existentialism simply ceases to exist as a philosophical current. This is why determinism must go!

In the name of Existentialism, Sartre demands recognition of the details of historical events, rejecting the idea of laws governing historical development. But without recognizing such laws there is no Marxism, no historical materialism. Sartre does not particularly

care how loose his language is, although the subject requires accuracy of expression. He says further:

> Historical materialism exists, and the law of that materialism is dialectics. But if, as certain authors maintain, by dialectical materialism is understood some kind of monism which wishes to direct human history from without, then it must be stated that there does not exist, or does not yet exist, any dialectical materialism.

Sartre is, of course, aware that the Existentialist individual with his "freedom" cannot be derived from any Marxist conceptions. Instead, he tries to make the transition from that individual to society, from freedom to necessity, from Existentialism to Marxism, by dragging in the concept of scarcity. He speaks of *rareté*—but the literal translation of the word as "rarity" does not express what he actually has in mind, namely, the lack or inadequacy of means to satisfy human needs. And here there arises a very serious misunderstanding; for Sartre—in all good faith, no doubt—now replaces Marxism with a version of social Darwinism:

> Certainly, [writes Sartre] however it may be with people and events, they have thus far appeared only within the framework of scarcity, i.e., within the framework of a society still incapable of freeing itself from the domination of its needs, and hence of nature, and which in this connection possesses limited techniques and instruments; a society torn asunder, overwhelmed by its needs and dominated by production, arousing antagonism between the individuals composing it; abstract relations between things, commodities and money, etc., are the premise and condition of direct relations between people; in this manner, implements, the circulation of commodities, etc., determine economic and social development.

Here Sartre tries to make economic scarcity the foundation of the whole mechanism of social development, including the class struggle. Human activity, he says, is carried on within the framework of scarcity of the means of subsistence; hence there is a surplus of population, and people naturally find themselves in antagonistic relations of competition with others for the division of the scarce means of satisfying their needs. The affinity of this with social Darwinism and Malthusianism is evident—but Sartre mis-

takes it for Marxism, with which it has nothing whatever in common. The Marxist conception of exploitation and surplus value is based on the fact that the worker produces *more* than the minimum amount required for his own satisfaction according to his historically determined living standards. The social problem in the United States today, for example, where the full employment of existing productive capacity would make possible the immediate transition to the Communist principle of distribution according to need, does not consist of any inadequacy in material means; and the class struggle there is certainly not waged within any framework of scarcity. Marxism opposes the ideas of social Darwinism and Malthusianism, and sees in them merely the apologetics of capitalism which imposes poverty amidst plenty.

The proposed marriage of Marxism and Existentialism cannot, then, be celebrated. Materialism and idealism cannot come together, and no kind of "dialectic" can unite them. Sartre has suffered the fate of many "completers" of Marxism before him, and has entirely failed as a "renewer" of Marxism.

But the fiasco of this marriage does not alter the fact, emphasized earlier, that some of the problems posed by Sartrist Existentialism are important problems. The failure of Sartre's hopeless attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable does not make their discussion any less urgent. Marxism cannot become one with Existentialism, but it can and must defeat it by tackling on its own ground those problems which constitute the vital part of Existentialism.

VII

A SUMMATION

GEORGE NOVACK

Among the participants in the controversy between Marxism and Existentialism in the United States is George Novack (1905——), who has written for numerous periodicals on questions of socialist theory and politics over the past three decades. He was born in Boston and educated at Harvard University. In 1937 he was instrumental in organizing the International Commission of Inquiry into the Moscow Trials, headed by the philosopher John Dewey.

He is the author of *An Introduction to the Logic of Marxism* (1942), *Uneven and Combined Development in History* (1958), *The Long View of History* (1960), and *Moscow Versus Peking* (1963) under the pen name of William F. Warde. He has been a research associate for the Fund for the Republic, a collaborator of the late C. Wright Mills, and recently he edited, with Isaac Deutscher, an anthology of Trotsky's writings, *The Age of Permanent Revolution* (1964). His historical work on *The Origins of Materialism* was published in 1965.

Basic Differences between Existentialism and Marxism is a slightly shortened version of an article that first appeared in the Spring, 1965, issue of *International Socialist Review*.

BASIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EXISTENTIALISM AND MARXISM

In his latest philosophical treatise, *The Critique of Dialectical Reason,* Jean-Paul Sartre has proposed a marriage between Exis-

tentialism and Marxism with himself officiating at the ceremony. Before the nuptials are celebrated, it should be helpful to inquire whether a synthesis of the two philosophies can be viable.

This article intends to show that the contending world outlooks cannot be harmonized or integrated into one containing "the best features" of both. A legendary Indian thought that by putting together fire and water he would concoct that most desirable of delights, "firewater." Actually, the one nullifies or extinguishes the other when they come into contact. It is the same with Marxism and Existentialism. Their fundamental positions over a broad spectrum of problems extending from philosophy and sociology to morality and politics are so divergent that they cannot really be reconciled.

This piece can do no more than indicate the main lines of their disagreement on the most important issues. Let us first consider their opposing conceptions of the nature of reality and then of science, which is the highest expression of man's endeavors to investigate and know the world around us.

1. Science and the Absurdity of Reality

For Existentialism the universe is irrational; for Marxism it is lawful.

The propositions of Existentialist metaphysics are set in a context of cataclysmic personal experience. They all flow from the agonizing discovery that the world into which we are thrown has no sufficient or necessary reason for existence, no rational order. It is simply there and must be taken as we find it. Being is utterly contingent, totally without meaning, and superfluous.

Human existence as such is equally meaningless. "It is absurd that we were born, it is absurd that we die," writes Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. Man does not know where he came from, why he is here, what he must do or where he is going. "Every existing thing is born without reason, prolongs itself out of the weakness of

inertia and dies by chance," says one of Sartre's characters in *Nausea*.

If the world is devoid of meaning and impervious to rational inquiry, a philosophy of existence would seem a contradiction in terms. In contrast to religious mysticism, philosophy aims to illuminate reality by means of concepts, the tools of reasoning. How is it possible to explain an unconditionally absurd universe or even find a foothold for theory in it?

Kierkegaard did contend that it was neither possible nor desirable to think systematically about the reality of life, which eluded the grasp of the abstracting intellect. Camus rejected Existentialist theorizing on similar grounds. It is hopeless, he asserted, to try to give rational form to the irrational. The absurdity of existence must be lived through, suffered, defied; it cannot be satisfactorily explained.

However, the professional thinkers of this school do not choose to commit philosophical suicide. They have proceeded, each in his own way, to elaborate a philosophy of "being in an absurd world." There is a logic to their illogicality. If everything is hopelessly contradictory, why should the enterprise of philosophy be an exception? The mission of man, they say, is to find out the meaning of meaninglessness—or at least give some meaning through his words and deeds to an otherwise inscrutable universe.

For dialectical materialism, reality has developed in a lawful manner and is rationally explicable. The rationality of nature and human history is bound up with matter in motion. The concatenation of cosmic events gives rise to cause and effect relations which determine the qualities and evolution of things. The physical has produced the biological, the biological the social and the social the psychological in an historical series of mutually conditioned stages. The aim of science is to disclose their essential linkages and formulate these into laws which can help pilot human activity.

The rationality, determinism and causality of the universal process of material development do not exclude but embrace the objective existence and significance of absurdity, indeterminism and accident.

However, these features are no more fundamental to reality than their contrary categories. They are not immutable and irremovable

aspects of nature and history but relative phenomena which in the course of development can change to the extent of becoming their own opposites. Chance, for example, is the antithesis of necessity. Yet chance has its own laws which are lodged in the occurrence of statistical regularities. Statistical laws which derive regularities from a sufficient accumulation of random happenings, as in quantum mechanics or the life-insurance business, exemplify how individual accidents are convertible into aggregate necessities.

Exceptions are nothing but the least frequent alternatives and, when enough exceptions pile up, they give rise to a new rule of operation which supersedes the formerly dominant one. The interplay of chance and necessity through the conversion of the exception into the rule can be seen in the economic development of society. Under tribal life, production for immediate personal consumption is the norm whereas production for exchange is a rare and casual event. Under capitalism, production for sale is the general law, production for one's own use is uncommon. What was categorically necessary in the first economic system is fortuitous in the second. Moreover, in the transition from one economy to the other the bearers of chance and necessity have changed places and become transformed into each other.

Social structures which are rational and necessary under certain historical circumstances become absurd and untenable at a further stage of economic development and are scrapped. Thus feudal relations which corresponded to a given level of the powers of social production became as anachronistic as Don Quixote and had to give way before the more dynamic forces and more rational forms of bourgeois society.

The Existentialists go wrong, say the Marxists, in making eternal absolutes out of chance events and unruly phenomena. These are not unconditioned and unchangeable but relative and variable aspects of being.

As a result of their conflicting conceptions of reality, the two philosophies have entirely different attitudes toward science. If the universe is irrational through and through, then science, which is the most sustained and comprehensive effort to render the relations and operations of reality intelligible and manageable, must

be nonsensical and futile. The Existentialists mistrust and downgrade the activities and results of science. They accuse the scientists of substituting conceptual and mathematical abstractions for the whole living man, proffering the hollow shell of rationality for its substance, neglecting what is most important in existence, and breeding an unbridled technology which, like Frankenstein's monster, threatens to crush its creator.

Marxism, which holds fast to the rationality of the real, esteems scientific knowledge and inquiry as its fullest and finest expression. It believes that the discovery of physical and social laws can serve to explain both the regularities and irregularities of development so that even the most extreme anomalies of nature, society and the individual can be understood.

Marxism and Existentialism have different conceptions of absurdity. To the Existentialist the absurd is not objectively manifested in either contingency or anachronism (the dialectic of history). It is wholly subjective, arising from the individual's apprehension that the most crucial questions about human life must remain unanswered because the world is inherently incomprehensible. Why, they ask with Pascal, should anyone be born, live, suffer and die now and not then, here and not there, in this way rather than that?

According to Marxism, this demand that all the questions a person can pose about the ultimate characteristics of things be answered regardless of historical circumstances flows from a false view of the relations between reason and reality. The world, which exists independently of man's explorations and explanations, is endlessly accessible to human reason but it does not have to conform to the latter. On the contrary, our reason must adjust itself to the natural, social and psychic facts as they are found in reality.

Whether certain questions about the universe and man's relations to it are unanswerable as well as unanswered will be determined by the nature of things. Dialectical materialism maintains that it is premature and stultifying to impose any *a priori* limits upon the possibilities of progress in knowledge. What appears meaningless and absurd at this point in human development may become fully understandable later on.

2. The Predominance of Ambiguity

In the eyes of the Existentialists ambiguity presides over existence. It is easy to see why. Ambiguity is a state between chaos and order, darkness and light, ignorance and knowledge. If the universe is ruled by chance, everything is inevitably and ineradicably indeterminate. The absence of cause-and-effect relations endows reality with a duplicity and disorder which renders it hopelessly obscure.

This uncertainty is exceedingly acute in the individual torn by the warring elements within himself. His predicament is all the more difficult because he is trapped in a maze of conflicting possibilities. He must act in a fog where indistinct shapes move in no definite direction and toward no ascertainable destination. Since the given situation has no intrinsic structure, trends or signs which make one alternative superior to another, the Existentialist is entitled to pick whatever solution he prefers. What comes out is then a matter of chance or caprice.

"The essential form of spiritual life is marked by ambiguity," observes Heidegger in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Simone de Beauvoir tells us that "from the very beginning, Existentialism defined itself as a philosophy of ambiguity." She has attempted to found an ethics on the tragic ambivalence of the human being who is tossed like a shuttlecock between pure externality and pure consciousness without ever being able to bring them into accord.

Merleau-Ponty likewise made ambiguity the leading principle of his social and political outlook. Men, he maintained, are thrust willy-nilly into situations where many conflicting forces are at work. These do not have any central line of development nor indicate any particular outcome. We must arbitrarily select one of the multifarious possibilities and act upon it amidst uncertainty and confusion. Our option makes and throws light on our character but cannot remove either the inherent ambiguity of the situation or the risk of the undertaking. Everything in life is a gamble.

Merleau-Ponty objected to historical materialism because it did not give accident primacy over necessity in history. He applied his sweeping indeterminism to the outcome of the struggle for social-

ism. "The possibility remains of an immense compromise, of a decaying of history where the class struggle, powerful enough to destroy, would not be powerful enough to build and where the master-lines of History charted in *The Communist Manifesto* would be effaced." This was the theoretical source of the skepticism behind his reluctance to join the Communist party and which later led to his rejection of the Stalinized Soviet Union as in any respect socialist.

The personages in the works of the Existentialist writers exemplify the enigmatic duplicity of the human being. They do not have stable characters or predictable courses of conduct. They plunge into unexpected and uncalled-for actions which contravene their previous commitments. Their lives and motives are susceptible to multiple meanings and inconclusive interpretations which their authors are not concerned to clarify since misunderstanding must accompany the ambiguity of existence. The latest example of this is Edward Albee's new play *Tiny Alice,* whose enigmatic symbolism has puzzled not only the drama critics but the author and director.

The problem of ambiguity is very real; it arises from the contradictory content of things. While the universe has a determinate structure and a discernible order of evolution, its elements are so complex and changing that the forms of their development can assume highly equivocal and puzzling appearances. The question is whether these paradoxical manifestions must remain forever indecipherable and unsettled or whether the diverse and misleading forms can be correlated by scientific means into some lawful pattern which gets at the essence of things.

The Existentialists refuse to concede that the outcome of a situation depends upon the relative weight of all the factors at work within it; they want to make the settlement depend entirely upon the will of the individual. This runs into conflict with their observation that the results of men's activities are often at odds with their intentions, desires and expectations. If this is so, what other and underlying forces determine the outcome? The Existentialists have no answer but accident. For them arbitrariness remains the arbiter of all events.

The materialist dialectician takes up where the baffled Existentialist leaves off. He proceeds from the premise that what can

become definite in reality can find clear-cut formulation in thought. No matter how hidden, complicated and devious the perplexing contradictions encountered in reality may be, they can with time and effort be unraveled. The dialectical essence of all processes consists precisely in the unfolding of their internal oppositions, the gradual exposure and greater determination of their polar aspects until they arrive at their breaking point and ultimate resolution. As the contending forces and tendencies within things are pushed to the extreme, they become more and more sharply outlined and less and less ambiguous. The struggle of opposites is brought to a conclusion and maximum clarification through the confrontation of irreconcilable alternatives and the victory of one over the other. This is the logical course and final outcome of all evolutionary processes.

Marxists do not regard ambiguity as an impenetrable and unalterable property of things or thoughts but as a provisional state which further development will overcome. Any unsettled situation can give way to greater determination. Reality and our understanding of it need not be forever ambiguous.

Order and disorder are relative features of things. The greatest chaos has sources of order within it, behind it and ahead of it. The most crystallized form of order contains elementary traces of irregularity which can in time spread out, upset and overturn its symmetry and stability. Moreover, ambiguity can be as much of a challenge and an opportunity as an obstacle. It prods knowledge and practice forward. Science advances and action becomes more effective as men succeed in displacing what is indeterminate and problematic with definite ideas about objectively determined things.

The Existentialists make much of the ineradicable ambiguity of history. They emphasize that history does not move in a straight line or a uniform manner from one point to another; indeed some among them question whether mankind has progressed at all. Marxism does not deny that history is full of irregularities, relapses, stagnation and oddities. Despite its zigzags, however, history has moved onward and upward from one stage to the next, from savagery to civilization, for ascertainable reasons. It exhibits necessities as well as ironic contingencies, final settlements as well as unresolved issues. The French feudalists, the British Loyalists, the

Southern slaveholders, the German Nazis and the Russian capitalists can attest to that.

3. The Individual and His Environment

For purposes of analysis, reality can be divided into two sectors: one public, the other private. There is the objective material world that exists around us, regardless of what anyone feels, thinks or knows about it. Against this is the inner domain of personal experience, the world as it appears to each one of us, as we perceive, conceive and react to it. Although these two dimensions of human existence are never actually disjoined and roughly correspond with each other, they do not coincide in certain essential respects. They can therefore be considered separately and studied on their own account.

Existentialism and Marxism take irreconcilable views on the nature of the relationship between the objective and subjective sides of human life, on the status, the interconnection and the relative importance of the public and private worlds.

Marxism says that nature is prior to and independent of man. Man as a product and part of nature is necessarily dependent upon it. Existentialism holds that the objective and subjective components of being do not exist apart from each other and that in fact the subject makes the world what it is. Heidegger tells us there is no world without man.

The contrast between the idealistic subjectivity of the Existentialist thinkers and the materialist objectivity of Marxism can be seen in the following assertion of Heidegger in *An Introduction to Metaphysics:* "It is in words and language that things first come into being and are." In accord with the conception that other aspects of reality acquire existence only to the extent that they enter man's experience, Heidegger makes not simply the meaning but the very existence of things emanate from man's verbal expression of them. To a materialist, such functions of man as speech and thought reflect the traits of things but do not create them. The

external world exists regardless of man's relations with it and apart from the uses he makes of its elements.

The whole of Existentialism revolves around the absolute primacy of the conscious subject over everything objective, whether it be physical or social. The truth and values of existence are to be sought and found exclusively within the experiences of the individual, in his self-discovery and self-creation of what he authentically is.

Marxism takes the reverse position. It gives existential priority, as every consistent materialism must, to nature over society and society to any single person within it. Nature, society and the individual coexist in the closest reciprocal relationship which is characterized by man's action in changing the world. In the process of subduing objective reality for his own ends, man changes himself. The subjective comes out of the objective, is in constant interaction and unbreakable communion with it, and is ultimately controlled by it.

These opposing conceptions of the object-subject relationship are reflected in the conflict between the two philosophies on the nature of the individual and his connections with the world around him. The category of the isolated individual is central in Existentialism. The true existence of a person, it asserts, is thwarted by things and other people. These external forces crush the personality and drag it down to their own impersonal and commonplace level.

The individual can attain genuine value only in contest with his external relationships. He must turn inward and explore the recesses of his being in order to arrive at his real self and freedom. Only at the bottom of the abyss where the naked spirit grapples with the fearful foreknowledge of his death are both the senselessness and the significance of his existence revealed to him.

Thus Existentialism pictures the individual as essentially divorced from his fellow humans, at loggerheads with an inert and hostile environment and pitted against a coercive society. This desolation of the individual is the wellspring of inconsolable tragedy. Having cut off the individual from organic unity with the rest of reality, from the regular operation of natural processes and the play of historical forces, Existentialism is thereafter unable to fit

the subjective reactions and reflections of the personality to his environing conditions of life. Indeed, says Sartre, man's attempts to make consciousness coincide with "facticity," the world of things, is a futile business.

By a grim paradox, the solitary individual is completely sovereign in shaping his real existence. With nothing but his own forces to lean on and his own judgment as a guide he must confront and solve all the problems of life.

Existentialism is the most thoroughgoing philosophy of individualism in our time. "Be yourself at all costs!" is its first commandment. It champions the spontaneity of the individual menaced by the mass, the class, the state. It seeks to safeguard the dignity, rights, initiatives, even the vagaries of the autonomous personality against any oppressive authority, organized movement or established institution.

With individual liberty as its watchword and supreme good, Existentialism is a creed of nonconformism. "I came to regard it as my task to create difficulties everywhere," wrote Kierkegaard in describing how he turned to an existentialist view of life. The Existentialists are averse to routine, externally imposed ideas or disciplined modes of behavior, and whatever is uncongenial to the desires of the ego. All submission to pressures and presences not freely chosen is evidence of "bad faith," says Sartre.

The targets of Existentialist protest are as diversified as the interests and inclinations of its exponents. These have ranged from religious orthodoxies to philosophical systematizing, from capitalist exploitation to Stalinist regimentation, from bourgeois morality to workers' bureaucratism. Kierkegaard set about to disturb the peace of mind of the hypocritical Danish middle class. Nietzsche heralded the superman who was to rise above the herdlike crowd and transcend good and evil. The favored heroes of Camus and Sartre are rebels and outsiders. Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre analyze writers like the Marquis de Sade and Jean Genet whose ideas and lives have outrageously flouted the ordinary canons of moral conduct.

It must be said that the heresies of the Existentialists do not always succeed in shedding completely the values of the society they rebel against. Kierkegaard assailed the sluggishness and self-decep-

tion of the smug citizens around him only to embrace the Christian God with more passionate intensity. And Sartre, who attacks stuffed shirts and stinkers for their egotism, clings to the concept of the totally free person beholden solely to himself as the pivot of his philosophy and moral theory.

Existentialism proclaims the urge of the individual to develop without hindrance. But its constitutional aversion to organized action of mass movements determined by historically given circumstances renders it incapable of finding an effective solution of the problem for the bulk of humanity. That is why it is nonconformist rather than revolutionary.

Historical materialism takes an entirely different approach to the relationship between the individual and his environment. Man is essentially a social being who can develop into an individual only in and through society. For Marx, the isolated individual is an abstraction. Everything distinctive of man, from tool-making, speech and thought to the latest triumphs of art and technology, are products of his collective activity over the past million years or so.

Take away from the person all the socially conditioned and historically acquired attributes derived from the culture of the collectivity and little would be left but the biological animal. The specific nature of the individual is determined by the social content of his existence, by the wealth of his social connections. This applies not only to his contacts with the outside world but to the innermost fibers of his being: his emotions, imagination, and ideas.

Even the special kind of solitude felt by people today is an outgrowth of the social system. One of the major contradictions of capitalism is that it has brought humans into the closest "togetherness" while accentuating conditions that pull them apart. Capitalism socializes the labor process and knits the whole world into a unit while separating men from one another through the divisive interests of private property and competition. Engels noted this when he described the crowds in the London streets in his first work, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844:* "This isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking is the fundamental principle of our society everywhere. . . . The dissolution of mankind into monads, of which each is a separate prin-

ciple, the world of atoms, is here carried out to its utmost extreme." The "barbarous indifference, hard egotism and nameless misery" which he observed over a century ago still strongly permeate our acquisitive society.

However much it has been violated in practice by bureaucratic powers which speak in its name, the defense and expansion of individuality is likewise one of the persistent concerns and chief aims of the socialist movement. Marxism differs from Existentialism by denying that individualism as a philosophy can provide an adequate method of social change and political action. Since the social structure shapes and dominates the lives of individuals, it has to be transformed by the collective struggle of the working people in order to eliminate the conditions that repress individuality and create an environment suited to the unhampered cultivation of the capacities of each living human being.

4. Freedom, Necessity and Morality

According to its supporters, the supreme merit of Existentialism is its capacity to explain and safeguard man's freedom. It is superior to Marxism, they claim, because it does not subjugate men to determinism, which robs them of free choice and moral responsibility for their deeds.

The problem of freedom and necessity arises from two apparently contradictory facts of life. Science teaches and practice confirms that nature and society have regularities which are expressed in laws. At the same time man deliberately selects between different lines of action. How can universal determinism coexist with freedom of choice?

The Existentialists cut this Gordian knot by depriving determinism of any sway over human beings. What is nonhuman may be subject to objective causation but man cannot be reduced to the status of a thing. To be human is to be free, that is to say, completely self-determined by successive acts of will. When external circumstances compel us to be or do anything against our will, we

are not behaving like human beings but like automatons. It is only by detaching ourselves from the given situation that we can freely decide the character and course of our lives. Thus, in order to preserve human choice intact, the Existentialists nullify determinism and lawfulness in favor of an unrestricted exertion of the will.

Marxism resolves the antithesis between scientific determinism and human choice in an altogether different manner. Man really becomes free by uncovering and understanding the laws of nature, society and thought. Our aims become effective to the extent that verified scientific knowledge enables us to control and change the world around us. The Existentialist demand for absolute personal freedom does not correspond to anything real or realizable. Men must act under the constraint of their conditions of life and cannot cast off their causal weight.

Human activity is an unequal synthesis of extrinsic determination and self-determination. Men react consciously and vigorously to their environment and take initiatives to alter certain aspects of it. The measure of control exercised by the objective and subjective components of the causal process changes and develops in the course of time according to the growth of man's mastery over nature and society. History has proceeded, by and large, toward greater freedom, toward a growth in man's ability to decide and direct an increasing number of activities.

The Existentialists regard determinism as an inveterate foe of human aims and aspirations. In reality, determinism can display either a hostile or friendly face to us, depending upon the given circumstances. Man became free for the first time in this century to travel through the atmosphere and even to leave this planet. This was achieved by finding out the principles of aerodynamics and utilizing them to design and construct the instruments to realize the aim of flight. In making aircraft, we have succeeded in putting the determinism of the material world to work for us, rather than against us.

The same is true of social determinism. Men have been enabled to enlarge their freedom not by ignoring and rejecting the determinants of history but by recognizing them and acting in accord with their requirements. The American people acquired and ex-

tended their liberties by seeing the need for abolishing British domination and Southern slaveholding when national progress demanded such revolutionary deeds.

Far from being incompatible with freedom, as the Existentialist thinks, natural and social necessities are the indispensable foundation of all the freedoms we have.

The Existentialists, however, are more concerned about the narrower dilemmas of personal responsibility than with the broader problem of the interaction of freedom and necessity in social and historical evolution. Both Existentialism and Marxism agree that our conduct has to be regulated and judged by relative human standards. Man is accountable only to himself and for himself and has no right to sanctify or justify his decisions by reference to any supernatural source.

What, then, is the basis of morality? Where do our standards of right and wrong come from?

The ethics of Existentialism is uncompromisingly libertarian. The individual creates both himself and his morality through his uncurbed choices. Authentic freedom manifests itself in the causeless selection among alternative possibilities and fulfills itself in the deliberate adoption of one's own set of values.

The Marxist theory of morality does not rest upon an inborn capacity of the individual to make unconditioned and unmotivated choices but upon historical and social considerations. Its position can be summarized as follows: (1) Morality has an objective basis in the conditions, relations, needs and development of society. Its rational character is derived from a correspondence with given historical realities and an understanding of specific social necessities. (2) Morality has a variable content and a relative character, depending upon changes in social circumstances. (3) Under civilization to date, morality inescapably takes on a class character. (4) There are no absolute standards of moral behavior and judgment. Human acts are not good or bad, praiseworthy or iniquitous in themselves. All moral codes and conduct must be evaluated by reference to the prevailing conditions and the concrete social needs, class interests and historical aims they serve.

The rival theories of morality are put to a test in cases which pose conflicting lines of action. The philosophical and literary

works of the Existentialists concentrate upon such "either-or" situations. To accept God—or reject Him? To join one side rather than the other? To turn traitor or remain loyal to one's comrades? To live—or die?

Existentialism insists that there cannot be any sufficient and compelling grounds within the situation itself, the individual's connections with it, or his own character to warrant choosing one rather than the other of mutually exclusive alternatives. Man, says Sartre, is the being through whom nothingness enters the world. This power of negation is most forcefully expressed in his perfect liberty to do what he pleases in defiance of all external circumstances. The exercise of fully conscious, uninhibited preference distinguishes man from the animals and one man from another. "By their choices shall ye know them."

The historical materialists reply that, while we can make choices in situations permitting real alternatives—that is the crux of personal morality—these decisions are not made in a void. Making up one's mind about the possibilities of a confusing or conflicting situation is only a part of the total process of moral action.

Voluntary acts are links in a chain of events which begins with objective circumstances and ends with objective consequences. The given situation, personal character, motivation, decision, action and results form a continuity of phases which are lawfully connected with one another and "feed back" upon one another. The uniqueness of individual choice does not consist in its self-sufficiency or release from essential relations with other concomitant facts but in contributing its special quality of approval or dissent, collaboration or resistance, to them.

The Existentialists deny any causal ties between the psychological act of choice and the circumstances in which it takes place. They sheer away the moment of personal decision from all that precedes and follows it. This introduces an unbridgeable chasm between the act of choice and the conditions, motivations and consequences of human action. However, there is no empirical evidence that choice occurs apart from and unaffected by the totality of concurrent conditions; this is a purely metaphysical assumption.

In fact, the power of choice is far from unlimited. A multitude of social, historical, biographical factors enter into the process of

moral determination. The real opportunities open to the individual are restricted by natural and social history, the forces operating in a particular situation and the trends of their development. These provide objective criteria which make it possible to ascertain beforehand whether one alternative is preferable to another or, after the fact, whether one was better than another. Moreover, the individual is predisposed, though not predestined, by his previous experiences and existing connections to take one path rather than another. Otherwise human behavior would be completely unpredictable.

The highest good in the Existentialist scale of values is personal sincerity which is certified by devotion to a freely chosen object of faith. This psychological quality, which is considered the most powerful manifestation of freedom, is the sole principle of moral worth. The feelings of the autonomous individual determine what is right or wrong in any given case.

Marxists judge actions to be good or bad, not according to the intentions or emotions of the agents, but by their correspondence with social and class needs and their service to historical aims. They are considered justified or unjustified to the extent that they help or hinder progress toward the goals of socialism. Good deeds must be judged by their consequences. They must actually lead to increasing man's command over nature and diminishing social evils.

According to Sartre, through the exemplary choice of my being, I accept responsibility not simply for myself but for all others. This doctrine of unlimited liability is no more valid in morality than in law. Objective circumstances also determine the degree of individual and collective responsibility. A person can be held responsible only for what he can change by his decision and action.

5. The Destiny of Man

The ambivalence of Existentialism is most conspicuous in its view of human destiny. It is at one and the same time a philosophy of the utmost despair and of breathless effort to go beyond it. Existential-

ism swings back and forth between these extremes. At one end stand the principal characters in *Waiting For Godot,* a classic of the Existentialist theater. They wait and wait but nothing important happens, nothing changes, no one comes. Their expectations continuously disappointed, they are sunk in the futility of an empty existence which must go on without hope or help.

But most writers and thinkers of this school cannot remain in the unrelieved apathy and inertia dramatized by Beckett. His ending is their point of departure. After looking the worst in the face, they challenge the tragic absurdity of existence. Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between "bad" Existentialism, which wallows in pure negativism, and "good" Existentialism, which strives to project itself beyond despair. Camus regards the revolt against nihilism as the basis of everything worthwhile.

The mark of man's freedom, says Sartre, is his conscious refusal to submit to any externally imposed condition of life. The authentic person will pass from total negation to self-affirmation in action, from nay-seeing to yea-saying. The individual forges his genuine self by bucking against the "pratico-inert" around him and surpassing his given situation through involvement in a characteristic venture, a cause, a future.

The Existentialists take many divergent paths out of the original abysmal human condition. The religious, like Kierkegaard, Marcel, Buber, Tillich, try to find a way to God. The unbelievers seek a solution, a transcendence, in this world. This quest has led the most radically inclined among them toward the revolutionary struggle of the working masses. As Julian Symons wittily put it, they would rather be "waiting for Lefty" than "waiting for Godot."

Yet they cannot completely merge themselves with the aims of any movement because of their stand on the insurmountable ambiguity of everything. Existentialism remains fundamentally a creed of frustration in the midst of fulfillment. The most brilliant success turns into failure as coal into ashes.

The hazardous leap from what is to what should be inevitably falls short of realization. For Camus every act of rebellion against oppression is justified in itself but installs a new form of servitude. For Sartre the act of transcendence negates itself in the very process of materialization, trickles out and dies. It must be followed by a fresh exertion of creative revolt which in turn will not reach its goal.

Thus mankind hungers but is never fully fed. We ask for nourishing bread and receive a stone. The most promising road forward winds up in a blind alley. Life is not only a gamble; it is in the end a cheat. We are swindled by the limitations of time, history and death which nullify our fondest hopes. "The sorrows of our proud and angry dust are from eternity and will not fail." But man always will.

Sartre has epitomized this pessimism coiled in the heart of Existentialism in the famous aphorism from *Being and Nothingness:* "Man is a useless passion." So grim a humanism in which every venture must turn out to be a lost cause can stimulate spasmodic expenditures of energy in social struggle. But the expectation that defeat lurks in ambush spreads skepticism and cripples the steadfastness of the inwardly divided individual at every step.

The pessimistic irrationalism of the Existentialists clashes head-on with the militant temper of Marxism, which feels sure of the victory of humanity over all obstacles. For the historical materialist man is above all the creative producer who has succeeded through his own titanic efforts in elevating himself from animality to the atomic age—and is just on the threshold of his authentically human career.

This belief in the rationality of social evolution and in the necessity of the socialist revolution to usher in the next stage of human progress is the theoretical source of the optimism which suffuses scientific socialism. Marxism points to the historical achievements recorded in man's rise over the past million years and incorporated in the accumulated knowledge, skills and acquisitions of world culture as tangible proofs of the worth of his work and as a pledge of the future.

The indomitable struggles for a better life among the downtrodden, the "wretched of the earth," the key role of the industrial workers in modern economy, the successes of the first experiments in nationalized property and planned economy even under extremely adverse conditions, give confidence to Marxists that the most difficult problems of our age are susceptible of solution through the methods of proletarian-peasant revolution and socialist reconstruction.

As in the past, many surprises, setbacks, disappointments and detours will be encountered enroute. These are part of the price

exacted by the fact that man has had to climb and sometimes crawl upward unaided by anything but his own collective efforts. Yet every great social and political revolution has added new stature and power to mankind despite the pains and even disenchantments attending it. The offspring of history have been worth the agonies of birth and the difficulties of their upbringing.

6. Alienation in Modern Society

Why do so many people nowadays feel that the major forces governing their lives are inimical and inscrutable and beyond their capacity to control or change? Where does this state of helplessness come from and what can be done to remove it? Their disagreements on the causes and cure of alienation in modern society constitute an impassable dividing line between the two philosophies.

Both Existentialism and Marxism recognize that men have become dehumanized by the alienations they suffer in contemporary life. Alienation expresses the fact that the creations of men's mind and hand—whether these are divine beings, a relentless and immutable nature or a social system—dominate their creators. The victims of this servitude become stripped of the qualities of self-determination and self-direction which raise them above the animal level.

For Existentialism man's alienation has neither beginning nor end. It is not an historical phenomenon but a metaphysical fate. It is a primordial, indestructible feature of human existence, the quintessence of "human nature."

The free and conscious human being is irreconcilably estranged from the world into which he has been hurled. Although he can introject meaning, value, usefulness into it, this does not efface its alien and absurd nature.

Hostility is likewise built into the structure of interpersonal relations. The world whose meaning I create differs from that of others. This produces incessant friction between me and other people who strive to impose their views on me, nullify my authentic existence

and divert me from my own needs and aims to serve their alien needs.

Finally, the individual is ill at ease with himself. Our inner being is rendered unhappy by the perpetual tension of conflicting impulses and claims. The goals we set are unrealized or result in something other than we expected or desired.

Since all these sources of alienation are ineradicable, we can do no more than clear-sightedly confront and stoically bear up under this somber state, trying to cope with it as best we can. All the diverse ways in which the Existentialists seek to transcend their fate—religion, artistic creation, good works, liberalism, social revolution—are by their own admission only palliative and superficial. They may make life tolerable and meaningful but do not and cannot end the condition of alienation.

Free men are obliged to try and overcome their alienation in ways most suitable to themselves—that is their glory. But their efforts prove unavailing—that is their melancholy destiny.

Alienation plays the same part in the Existentialist metaphysics as Adam's fall from grace in Christian theology. It is the equivalent of original sin. Just as Jehovah expelled the erring pair from Paradise and condemned their descendants to sin and suffering on earth forever after, so through the fatality of our existence as humans we are eternally and ineluctably withdrawn from others and enclosed within ourselves. There is no release or redemption from such estrangement.

Instead of indicating any exit from the state of alienation, Existentialism makes it the permanent foundation of human life, reproducing and justifying it in metaphysical terms.

Marxism gives a materialist and historical analysis of alienation. It is the product of man's impotence before the forces of nature and society and his ignorance of the laws of their operation. It diminishes to the extent that man's powers over nature and his social relations, and his scientific knowledge of their processes of development, are amplified.

The idolatries of magic and religion by which men prostrate themselves before supernatural beings of their own imaginative manufacture are the most primitive forms of alienation. But the

alienations peculiar to civilization are based, not upon man's subjection to nature, but upon his subjection to other men through the exploitation of labor.

This type of alienation originates in a highly developed division of labor and the cleavage of society into antagonistic classes. Bereft of the conditions of production, the mass of direct producers lose control over their lives, their liberties and means of development, which are at the mercy of hostile social forces. This is obvious under slavery, which was the first organized system of alienated labor. The alienation of labor is far more complex and refined under capitalism, where it attains ultimate expression.

The wage workers are subjected to uncontrollable external forces at every step of capitalist economy. Having none of the material prerequisites of production, they must go to work for their owners. Even before physically participating in production, they surrender their labor power to the entrepreneur in return for the payment of the prevailing wage. While at work, the conditions and duration of the job are determined by the capitalist and his foremen. As men on the assembly line can testify, workers become degraded into mere physical accessory factors of production. Instead of intelligently exercising their capacities, they are constrained to perform monotonous, repetitious tasks which strain their endurance. The plan, process and aim of production all confront them as hostile and hurtful powers.

At the end of the industrial process the product does not belong to the workers who made it but to the capitalist who bought their labor power. It goes into the market to be sold. There the mass of commodities and money function like an untameable force which even the biggest groups of capitalists cannot control, as the fluctuations of the business cycle and periodical crises demonstrate.

On top of this, the competitiveness of capitalism pits the members of all classes against one another and generates unbridled egotism and self-seeking. The members of bourgeois society, whatever their status, are immersed in an atmosphere of rivalry rather than communal solidarity.

Thus the underlying causes of the alienations within capitalism come from the contradictory relations of its mode of production and the class antagonisms and competitive conditions engendered by them. The divisions rooted in the economic foundations of capi-

talism branch out into all aspects of social life. They appear in the collisions of class interests and outlooks on a national and international scale, in the opposition of monopolist-dominated governments to the mass of the people, in the struggle of the creative artist against commercialism, in the contrast between metropolitan slums and ghettos and luxury apartments and hotels, in the subordination of science to militarism, and myriad other ways. Its cruelest and sharpest large-scale expression today in the United States is the deep-going estrangement between the black people and the white.

These stigmata mangle human personalities, injure health, stamp out the chance of happiness. They produce many of the mental and emotional disturbances which make up the psychopathology of everyday life in the acquisitive society.

Can the alienations of modern man be overcome? The Existentialists contend that they cannot. Marxism replies that these characteristics of a barbarous past and exploitative present can be removed by revolutionizing outworn social structures. Now that mankind has achieved superiority over nature through science and technology, the next great step is to gain supremacy over the blind and anarchic forces in our lives. The sole agency that is strong and strategically enough placed to carry through this task of instituting conscious collective control over economic and political life is the power of alienated labor embodied in the industrial working class.

The material means for liberating mankind from the causes and consequences of alienation can be brought into existence only through the socialist revolution which will concentrate economic, political and cultural power in the toiling majority. Planned economy along socialist lines on an international scale can lead to such plenty that the circumstances permitting and even necessitating the rule over the many by the few will be wiped out forever.

When all the compulsory inequalities in the conditions of life and labor and in access to the means of self-development are done away with, then the manifestations of these material disparities in the estrangements of one section of society from another will die away. The equal and fraternal relations at the base of the future socialist culture will facilitate the formation of integrated personalities no longer at odds with each other or with themselves.

* * *

It should be plain that the disagreements between Existentialism

and Marxism are not superficial or incidental; they reach to the roots of the basic questions of human life in our time. The differences are far too deep-going to be reconciled or effaced. That is why these rival schools of thought cannot be mated with fruitful results in either philosophy or politics.

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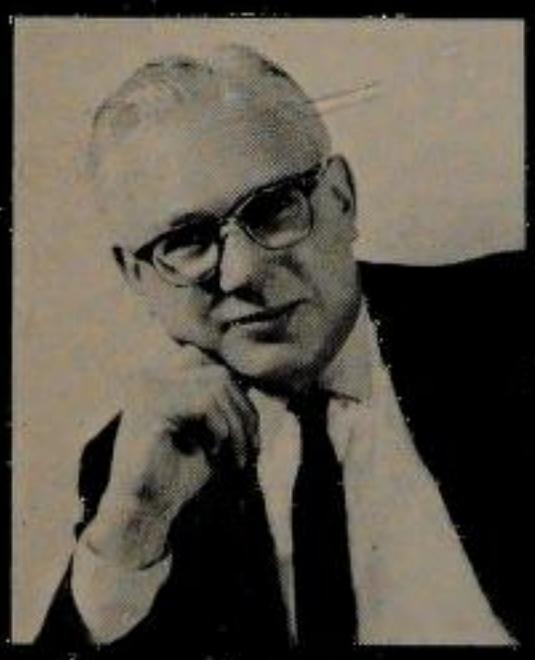
There is an increasing division between Existentialism and Marxism, despite Jean-Paul Sartre's attempts to bridge these two influential philosophies of the twentieth century. The chief difference lies in the rational and irrational conceptions of the nature of the universe and of society. The expression of this condition has become more vehement and widespread, as is indicated in **EXISTENTIALISM VERSUS MARXISM.**

Included in this original and rich anthology are such classical figures as Nietzsche, Marx, and Engels, and such modern thinkers as Sartre, Camus, Marcuse, Lukacs, Schaff, et al. The editor's illuminating introduction sets up the battle lines clearly, enabling the reader to understand the meaning and engage in the excitement of the confrontation.



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